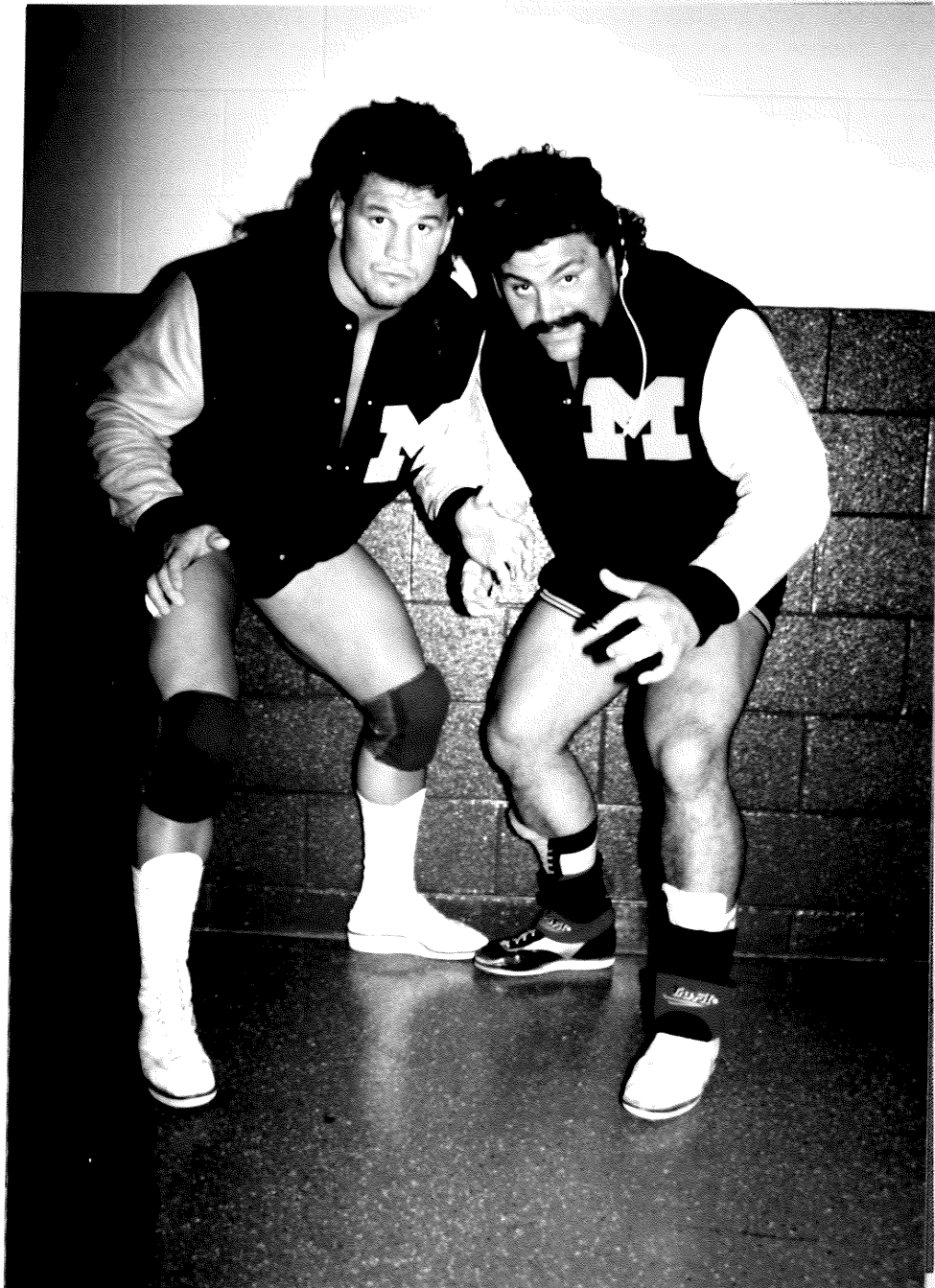
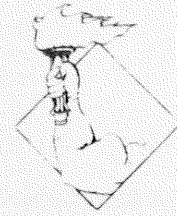


Pro Wrestling
TORCH



SCOTT & RICK STEINER: 1990 TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

WINTER YEARBOOK 1990

EDITOR/PUBLISHER: WADE KELLER

Progressive Wrestling Journalism

WINTER YEARBOOK 1990

INTRODUCTION

BY WADE KELLER

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When I set out to do this year-end book, I expected I would review the year, cover the year-end awards, and have a few filler features equalling 36 pages. I look at it now as I am an "Introduction" away from completion and see a 56 page book ready to go to the printers. It is too late to raise the price, so you are just going to live with the bigger than expected book. Please note, though, that this book is \$10.00 for non-subscribers and \$7.50 for subscribers, so if you recommend a friend purchase a copy, be sure they send \$10.00 for the book or at least \$12.50 for a book and a four issue set.

This last year of publishing The Torch has been a tremendous learning experience for me. Since we last published a Winter Yearbook, the Torch has gone weekly. In the process of going weekly, I found myself taking the newsletter much more seriously. I found I had to keep on the news and dig up stories instead of letting them come to me. I am very proud of the series of "Torch Talk" interviews Pro Wrestling Torch has featured in the past year. I am proud of the tremendous improvement in the Torch from every aspect, including the columnists' contributions, the reader support, the correspondents, and everyone in and out of the business who helps make this possible. Thanks.

Twice a year I spend several weeks in a row staring at a computer screen for hours and hours typing up wrestling Winter YEARBOOKS and Summer ANNUALS. This is the sixth wrestling book I have put together and published and I believe it is on the same level as last Summer's ANNUAL III 1990, which I thought was the best book I had done. By the way, I still have additional copies of the ANNUAL III from the third printing available for \$10.00. See page 18 for details on the seventy page book.

This book begins with a two page "Review and Analysis" of 1990 written by me. It is a capsule review of the year 1990 and some analysis on what it meant to pro wrestling.

The third annual "Torch Year-End Awards" follows which features the results of the year-end poll in 26 categories. First, thanks to all of you who voted this in this year's poll. There were some surprise winners and some surprises in who did not make some lists. After the top ten finishers are listed, readers comments follow, and then each category is concluded with my top three choices in each category. "Unofficial Torch Awards" can be found in the year-end awards section featuring all of the categories the readers thought should have been included and their top pick for that category.

The book then moves away from the year-end features to some humor. It begins with a half-page of letters received by Mick Karch. Mick, who happens to be a Torch columnist, also hosts a two-and-a-half hour wrestling block in Minnesota called "Saturday Night At Ringside." Besides NWA World Wide and USWA Challenge, he throws in a half hour of local features over the two-and-a-half hours. In this Torch feature, which appears every six months in Torch's special books, he reprints excerpts of some of the more interesting or strange letters he receives from TV viewers. Then Bill Kunkel graces the pages of the this book with four pages of his most popular character, "Oldie Anderson: Wrestling's Grumpy Old Man." In this four page comic strip, the reader finds out what Oldie has been up since being fired as booker of World Championship Wrestling and the real reason behind him getting fired. It will shock you. The humor section concludes with two pages of the very popular weekly feature, "Unofficial Top Ten Lists" ala Late Night With David Letterman.

Then we move on to two special Torch features. One is a special Torch interview with Mad Dog Vachon. Mad Dog discusses with Jeff Bowdren his transition from the Olympics to pro wrestling, the way he got his nickname, what he thinks of wrestling today, and his thoughts on some current names and names from the past. Next comes Mick Karch's second feature in the yearbook where he tells the story of his "wrestling career" and how it almost landed him a cell in jail.

The special section on Japanese wrestling comes next. "Exploring Japanese Wrestling" features three articles by Chris Zavisa, Mike Lano, and Steve Gerber. Steve and Mike discuss their trip to Japan during the first week of 1991 while Chris draws on his decade of Japanese video tape viewing to give the top reasons why Japanese wrestling is superior to American wrestling. I really like these three articles and believe anyone who reads them will learn more about wrestling and how it can be run more successfully, or at least differently, than here in the States.

One of the more revealing features ever published by the Torch comes next. The next eleven pages feature a comprehensive interview with Jim Cornette, formerly with World Championship Wrestling. Cornette gives his views and states his observations and opinions on his entire stay working for WCW since TBS purchased it from The Crocketts.

As usual, I must extend mega-thanks to everyone that contributed, whether it was by filling out a ballot or writing a full-length article. The Yearbook would not be what it is without your help. It is with great anticipation that I await your response to this book. As much as I enjoyed putting this together, the real payback is when I get your phone messages and letters. Let me know what you liked and just as importantly, what you did not like. I will pass on your comments to the contributors. I hope you will share this book with other wrestling fans who may be interested in purchasing their own copy or just browsing through yours.

To all the subscribers, I will talk to ya' next week. To all of you non-subscribers, hurry and send in \$5.00 per four issues. Give us a shot, I have a feeling you will become addicted. Now you may turn the page and enjoy the fifty-six pages previewed in this introduction. ***

1990: REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

By: Wade Keller

1990 began with expectation that the next 365 days would shape the next decade of pro wrestling. And for a while, it looked like that would be the case.

Ric Flair, it was determined by the hierarchy of World Championship Wrestling, was no longer marketable and no longer worthy of heading their promotion. First Sting was chosen to be their franchise wrestler. Sting opened the year by defeating Ric Flair by pinfall at Starrcade '89 to win the "Iron Man" competition. At the Clash of the Champions X in Corpus Christi, Texas on February 6, the three senior members of The Four Horsemen unceremoniously kicked Sting out of their group. Later that night, vying for revenge, Sting climbed a cage in an attempt to attack Ric Flair and Ole and Arn Anderson, but he never made it more than three feet off the ground. He damaged his patella tendon in one of his knees in a freak accident and did not resurface in the ring until July.

That left WrestleWar's main event half-empty. It was filled in an emergency move by turning Lex Luger babyface and placing him in the main event. Flair and Luger had a great match at WrestleWar on February 25 and their feud continued through May. At one point Luger was slated to win the title, but that scenario got nixed for political reasons.

Three days before WrestleWar, Ric Flair resigned as booker of WCW, then called the National Wrestling Alliance. He was replaced by a booking committee consisting of Jim Ross, Terry Funk, Jim Cornette, Jim Barnette, Kevin Sullivan, and Jim Herd until Ole Anderson took over in May.

In July, Flair was considering jumping from WCW to go to the WWF and set up a match between he and Hulk Hogan for Wrestlemania VII at the L.A. Coliseum. Flair, in a move that dramatically changed the future of wrestling and, no doubt, the success of Wrestlemania VII, decided to stay in WCW.

Meanwhile, in the WWF, a new World Champion was being groomed also. The WWF decided it would be best to remove the World Title from Hulk Hogan's waist and place it around Ultimate Warrior in an attempt to create a second main event star for the promotion. At Wrestlemania VI, April 1 at Skydome in Toronto, Canada in front of an almost sold-out crowd, Warrior pinned Hogan cleanly after Hogan missed a legdrop. This face vs. face match was unique for a WWF major show and was not considered a great financial success. Hogan did not get a rematch for the rest of the year while the WWF tried hard to make Ultimate Warrior the next phenom in the industry.

The longtime third major group, the Verne Gagne-owned American Wrestling Association, made an attempt at reestablishing themselves as a major promotion in 1990. In front of 63,000 fans in Tokyo, Larry Zbyszko was pinned by Masanori Saito in an early-card match to crown a new AWA World Champion. Saito returned to the States to defend the title against Larry Zbyszko. The AWA returned to their longtime home, the St. Paul Civic Center on April 8. A disappointing crowd of around 2000 fans saw Larry Zbyszko recapture the World Title.

Meanwhile, the syndication network was focused on the "Team Challenge Series," a yearlong series of TV matches between three teams captained by Sgt. Slaughter, Baron Von Raschke, and Larry Zbyszko. The AWA featured strange matches, such as football matches, mixed tag matches, turkey on a pole matches, and others even more strange. The AWA's final coffin nail, for 1990 at least, occurred when the cooperation deal with WCW was nixed after Ric Flair defeated Brian Pillman on the AWA's second return card in St. Paul. Ric Flair fought Brian Pillman to a tremendous, bloody brawl which stole the show on May 5. For trivia buffs, this was the last night that two of the original Four Horsemen, Ric Flair and Tully Blanchard, wrestled on the same card and only the second time Flair ever fought Pillman; the other gained the record-setting 4.4 ratings on TBS. Tully Blanchard teamed with Wayne Bloom & Mike Enos, Destruction Crew, against former Minnesota Viking Bob Lurtsema, The Trooper Del Wilks, and Brad Rheingans.

When the deal fell through, the AWA ended up cancelling their June 23 return date. The final AWA match ever taped for television at the final TV tapings on August 11 in Rochester, MN saw an unlikely winner: Perennial loser, Jake "The Milkman" Millman, who was the lone survivor in the "Team Challenge Series" Royal Rumble style battle royal winning the "Team Challenge Series" for Zbyszko. Since the August 11 taping's matches were all aired, the AWA filled their local Minnesota television shows with old matches from the early eighties along with special music videos. At year's end, there looked to be little hope for the AWA as their last wrestler, Larry Zbyszko, was stripped of the AWA Title as he opted to work for WCW.

And little hope remained for the new World Champions in WCW and the WWF. Ultimate Warrior proved to be less of a draw as World Champion than when he was Intercontinental Champion and headlining cards. His series of matches with Rick Rude were often of good quality, ending with Warrior defeating Rude in Summerslam's main event cage match. Rude soon left the WWF.

Hulk Hogan was squashed by Earthquake on a Brother Love Show which was followed by threats of Hogan retiring. Weeks before

Summerslam on August 27, Hogan returned. He defeated Earthquake at Summerslam via countout.

Sting, meanwhile, defeated Ric Flair to become the new WCW World Champion at the Great American Bash pay-per-view event in Baltimore, Maryland on July 7. Sting feuded with Flair in return matches which did not pop the house show attendance. Sting was then moved into tag matches and eventually a feud with Sid Vicious. Halloween Havoc was headlined with Sting defending the WCW Title against Sid Vicious. The poor match was capped off with Sting getting pinned. However, the man who got pinned was actually Barry Windham with a new flat top and makeup and Sting-like tights. Sting soon returned to the ring and pinned Sid for the official decision.

Ole Anderson, who became booker of WCW in May, got most of his criticism for his relentless push of The Black Scorpion as Sting's number one contender. The abstract Scorpion, whose identity changed nightly, never sold tickets. The biggest success of the Sting-Scorpion series came with their initial meeting when Scorpion was played by Al Perez. A lot of ratings credit must also go to the first free meeting on television between Ric Flair and Lex Luger which preceded Sting's defense.

Ole Anderson was criticized earlier in the year for his racist angle pushing The Four Horsemen against The Dudes With Attitudes. The Dudes were Sting, Junkyard Dog, Paul Orndorff and sometimes The Steiners or Lex Luger. Flair's first defenses after his series with Luger ended at "Capital Combat" in May were against Junkyard Dog. This match headlined a Clash in June and was far from the standards set by previous main event clashes. Ole, because of his pushing of older stars and statements about "returning to the 1970's," he became known in Torch Weekly as "The Grumpy Old Man, Oldie Anderson," as dubbed by Bill Kunkel (see "Oldie Anderson" mini-strip elsewhere in this book).

1990 closed with Sting pinning The Black Scorpion at Starrcade to end that angle two months too late. The Scorpion was revealed to be Ric Flair in a very anti-climatic post-match unmasking. The highlight of the later part of the year for WCW was the Stan Hansen-Lex Luger series over the U.S. Title and Doom's defenses against Ric Flair & Arn Anderson of the World Tag Team Titles. Ole Anderson was fired on December 1, and as the year ended, it became known that Dusty Rhodes would be the replacement in January.

In the WWF, 1990 closed with anticipation of Wrestlemania at the L.A. Sports Arena. The angle that was in progress to set up the main event saw a big push of Sgt. Slaughter and his manager, General Adnon. The Survivor Series was won by Hulk Hogan on Thanksgiving to further push him back to the top of the WWF.

1990 was a terrible year for house show business to the point where WCW crowds hit an all-time low, the AWA quit running house shows, and the WWF dropped their schedule from three shows per night to two. WCW had their usual five pay-per-views per year while the WWF had their usual four. The WWF continued to have higher buy-rates for the pay-per-views, but the bulk of both top promotions' income came directly from pay-per-view, which has indeed become the dominant source of income in wrestling more so in 1990 than any other year.

1990 saw other major stories, such as Eddie Gilbert's departure from WCW under controversial circumstance and immediately headlining USWA events in Tennessee and soon becoming head booker. His stint as booker was far from successful, although it is attributable more to the lack of interest overall in wrestling in Tennessee than lack of creative booking. Gilbert's most famous booking move saw him hit Jerry Lawler with a car in an angle to attempt to get fans back to the arenas. It increased crowds a little, but the gates were never consistently over \$20,000 and the vast majority of the time, under \$10,000.

The USWA Texas territory was shutdown after Jerry Jarrett surrendered the territory to Kevin Von Erich, who sued Jarrett for control of the territory. Jarrett surrendered, although to this day no one knows what exactly he was surrendering except the right to run there for a while and a draw a few hundred fans a week. When Kevin Von Erich took over, the crowds dipped even further until he ran out of funds to continue to run events. Jarrett planned to begin running events at the Sportatorium again early in 1991.

One of the biggest stories of the year was Joe Pedicino's claim to have financial backers of \$25 million who wanted him to start a new pro wrestling organization called the Global Wrestling Federation. Late in November, Joe Pedicino announced that he and Kongi Sports purchased the USWA from Jerry Jarrett. It ended up that there was only an agreement of intent to sell and only to sell the syndication network to Pedicino. The deal, which looked to be the formation of a new big third promotion fell through and as 1990 ended, there were mixed opinions in wrestling on Global's chances to ever get started.

Jim Cornette departure from WCW created headlines. His departure is detailed elsewhere in this book, but in short, the

loss of Cornette under the leadership of Ole Anderson was just part of a discouraging trend in WCW. The hiring of big wrestlers with minimal experience or skill became the trend over hiring smaller wrestlers who could assure a better overall product. That trend had slowed at year's end, but was predominant throughout 1990. That trend led to a decreased level of wrestling in WCW to the point where WCW was no longer the better wrestling alternative to the glitz of the WWF.

Kerry Von Erich's entrance into the WWF in July was a big story, only because the WWF had wanted Kerry Von Erich in their organization since his glory days in 1983 and 1984 for World Class Championship Wrestling. When Kerry entered, he was dubbed "The Texas Tornado" and given a big initial push. He defeated "Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig to become the new Intercontinental Champion. Von Erich lost the title back to Hennig on November 19 after being much less effective than anticipated by WWF officials.

The Juicer's entrance into WCW created an uproar in the newsletters and mainstream press. "The Juicer" Art Barr recently had left Don Owen's regional promotion in Portland after pleading guilty to sexually assaulting a young woman in the stairwell of a wrestling arena. Many in the media were appalled that WCW would hire an admitted sexual offender to play the role of children's idol. The story ended when Juicer's days with WCW ended as the 1990 calendar expired. Barr, who is a very talented highspot artist, deserves a job in wrestling, although many think playing the role of a children's idol was inappropriate.

The title change that never was featured The Rockers supposedly defeating The Hart Foundation for the tag titles in the WWF. The Fort Wayne, Indiana title change set to air on a November 24 Saturday Nights Main Event on NBC was cancelled right along with the SNME. NBC rescheduled the WWF for a Friday night time slot with 30 fewer minutes. The title change was ignored and The Hart Foundation remained champions. Jack Tunney explained to Indiana fans that because the ropes were loose, the wrestlers did not have ample opportunity to fairly compete. A few weeks later a televised match aired in which Ted DiBiase blatantly interfered causing Kerry Von Erich to lose the Intercontinental Title to Curt Hennig and the decision stood.

In Minnesota, the Pro Wrestling American group, one of the stronger regional part-time promotions in the country, featured a great series of matches during the year between Ricky "The Prophet" Rice and Jerry Lynn over the PWA Title. The Lightning Kid, Sean Waltman, entered the situation creating a three way feud. Their matches made the few hundred house show attending fans left in Minnesota not miss the AWA. The Rice-Lynn series was highlighted at Ray Whelbe's "Wrestle For Shelter" event on September 15 where they fought to a four and three-quarter star outdoor match which saw great in ring action and wild out of ring brawling. Another great independent outdoor match in New Jersey featured Stan Hansen fighting Terry Funk in a wild brawl that has become a video tape collector's item.

The most tasteless angle of 1990, later dropped and apologized for, saw Atsushi Onita set up an angle between himself and Jose Gonzales in Puerto Rico, the man who stabbed Bruiser Brody in 1987 causing Brody to die. The angle consisted of a reenactment of the stabbing incident with Onita on the receiving end. Onita was taken to the hospital and "when he survived," it was announced Gonzales would meet Onita in Japan in the grudge match of the century. The media and fans were repulsed by the angle and it was dropped. Onita continued to head his Frontier Martial Arts Wrestling promotion in Japan known for its brutal style and bloody brawls.

One of the all-time great wrestlers of the past died on August 16. Pat O'Connor, former NWA World Champion, retired from wrestling in 1982 and promoted for a few years after in St. Louis.

The USWA Tennessee territory was filled with controversy during the summer when Snowman showed up on the live set in what appeared to be an unplanned appearance. He challenged Jerry Lawler, who had won and lost the title to Jimmy Valiant weeks earlier, to a USWA Title match. Snowman ended up defeating Lawler for the belt and never lost it back. He began no-showing USWA shows on August 11 and eventually a tournament was set up to crown a new USWA Champion. Lawler won the tournament, but soon lost it to Terry Funk, who held it as the year came to a close. Early in the year, jobber King Cobra defeated Jerry Lawler for the USWA Title, but weeks later Lawler regained it.

1990 saw the birth and execution of a new promotion called the Universal Wrestling Federation. It was headed by Herb Abrams, who entered the scene amidst self-inflicted controversy. At a press conference in New York, he announced the formation of the UWF and also that Bruiser Brody would be one of his wrestlers. Abrams's first attempt at a television taping never occurred after a string of unlikely events. But days later the taping took place and Abrams appeared on SportsChannel as scheduled in mid-September replacing Rob Russen's IWA program. Russen signed the deal to appear on SportsChannel in June, but was replaced after the initial 13 week contract.

The IWA featured a lot of independent stars, such as Derrick Dukes, Larry Cameron, Manny Fernandez, Ivan Koloff, The Fantastics, and Preston Steele. The shows were criticized for their mainly squash match format with few angles or creativity. The IWA signed with the Hagen Sports Network late in the year which put the IWA back on selected cable markets.

The Road Warriors finally made the big move to the World

Wrestling Federation. They entered the WWF and called themselves The Legion of Doom. Their initial feud with Demolition did not pop houses like the WWF has hoped and expected. The LOD were never the focus of any major angles in 1990 and the assumptions were no longer apparent that Vince McMahon would know how to use Hawk and Animal effectively.

In Japan, Megame-Super, a major eyeglasses company in Japan announced the signing of Genichiro Tenryu to a million dollar contract. Akira Maeda was also given a similar offer, but turned it down in favor of continuing to work for his UWF promotion. Megame-Super formed Super World Sports and added a few mid-level performers, such as Naoki Sano, to its roster. By year's end, a deal was struck to work with the World Wrestling Federation on a talent trade agreement.

On the announcing side of the sport, the very popular duo of Chris Cruise and Terry Funk, hosts of World Wide Wrestling, WCW's top syndicated show, left the promotion in April. This came a few weeks after Tony Schiavone returned to his roots in WCW and left the WWF. When Funk did not show up for a TV taping, Chris Cruise was told he was to co-host the TV show with Kevin Sullivan. Cruise refused to work with Sullivan for personal reasons and walked out. Tony Schiavone, who was present in a producing capacity, filled in with Sullivan at the last moment and Schiavone hosted the show for the rest of the year.

In the WWF, Jesse Ventura left his role as color commentator of WWF's Superstars of Wrestling with Vince McMahon. There was a disagreement over Ventura's right to sign a deal with Nintendo to market a game using Ventura's name when Nintendo was a competitor with the company Titan had a deal with, Acclaim. Ventura left and dedicated his time to running for mayor of a Minneapolis suburb. He won the election and is now Jesse "The Mayor" Ventura or Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. Ventura was replaced by Piper, who ironically starred with Ventura in an ABC pilot to a series called "Tag Team." "Tag Team" did not make it onto the regular fall schedule.

1990 saw the end of Andre the Giant's full-time career wrestling in the States and Canada. At Wrestlemania VI, Andre and Haku lost the WWF Tag Team Titles to the team they beat for the titles, Demolition. Andre was blamed for the loss and turned face as he hit Heenan and left the scene.

In March, Destruction Crew, then AWA World Tag Team Champions, worked for WCW under masks as "The Minnesota Wrecking Crew II" and challenged The Steiners for the WCW Tag Team Titles. This was the first time since The Road Warriors as AWA Champs fought The Koloffs, then NWA Champs, that Tag Team Champions from competing promotions wrestled each other. Crew was brought in due to Arn Anderson's injury. Arn and Ole Anderson were scheduled to challenge The Steiners around the horn for the titles. Crew lost every match to The Steiners and returned to the AWA. Crew held the titles until August where they lost then to D.J. Peterson and The Trooper while The Steiners held their tag titles until May's "Capital Combat" where Doom won and held the belts for the rest of the year.

1990 began with a the WWF losing a battle to Viewer's Choice cable. The WWF attempted a powerplay to eliminate the middleperson in the pay-per-view process for their January Royal Rumble. Their attempt failed and they worked with Viewers Choice and Request TV for the rest of the year.

Mike Tyson was scheduled to enter the world of pro wrestling, but his appearance was cancelled when he lost his Heavyweight Title to Buster Douglas in a fluke in Japan. Buster Douglas replaced Tyson in referring the live prime time match on NBC when Hogan pinned Randy Savage on February 23.

Hulk Hogan's best match of the year came on April 23 where All-Japan, New-Japan, and Titan Sports worked together for an unprecedented supercard at the Tokyo Dome. In the main event, Hogan pinned Stan Hansen to retain his WWF World Title. At the end of 1989, Hulk Hogan teamed with Brutus Beefcake to defeat Zeus and Randy Savage in a one-match pay-per-view event on December 28. The one match complemented an airing of "No Holds Barred," Hulk Hogan's movie based on a Hogan-Zeus feud. Zeus was finished with the WWF after that show.

Brutus Beefcake's face was crushed in a July parasailing accident on Florida. Beefcake did not wrestle for the rest of the year, but was planning a comeback with a protective mask as the 1990 ended.

1990's biggest story in retrospect may be Superstar Graham's public denouncement of steroid use. He blames steroids for his body's condition, now seriously deteriorated. He went public on talk shows across the country attempting to discourage another generation from feeling steroid's long-term side-effects a decade from now. His warnings were largely ignored. Ten years from now, that could be looked at as the story of the year.

Looking back on 1990, it was full of controversy, change, and injuries. 1990 seriously lacked quality wrestling. It was a year of change with both Hogan and Flair losing to face-painted musclemen, Ultimate Warrior and Sting. As 1990 came to a close, there was little question that both Sting and Ultimate Warrior were not successful experiments and that Flair and Hogan would probably end up regaining the World Titles in 1991.

As pro wrestling begins 1991, the WWF is entering the biggest test since its national expansion, which is surviving in a downtime and testing their reliance on Hulk Hogan. WCW faces a period of change with Dusty Rhodes returning to book and Flair regaining the World Title.

In one sentence, 1990 was the year of failed experiments and down business. ***

1990 TORCH YEAR-END AWARDS

By: Wade Keller

Welcome to the third annual Pro Wrestling Torch Year-End Awards. The following pages feature the top ten finishers in twenty-seven categories followed by a list of the winners in past years' balloting. The percentage of overall points is listed next to the top five finishers. Points were distributed on a 5-3-1 basis for first, second, and third place votes. Reader comments are also printed, following by my choices for the top finishers in each category. Thanks to all of you who participated in this year's award balloting.

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|---------------|-----|
| 1) RIC FLAIR | 31% |
| 2) HULK HOGAN | 14% |
| 3) STING | 13% |
| 4) TERRY FUNK | 8% |
| 5) LEX LUGER | 8% |

6-10) Curt Hennig, Scott Steiner, Jerry Lawler, Bobby Eaton, Bret Hart, Eddie Gilbert, and Cactus Jack.

1989: Ric Flair (Terry Funk, Lex Luger, Hulk Hogan)

1988: Ric Flair (Ted DiBiase, Randy Savage, Owen Hart)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY NORDQUIST: Ric Flair, Terry Funk, and Eddie Gilbert. Flair and Funk are still the epitome of professional wrestling. Gilbert remains the greatest source of hope for the future.

RANDY RAY: As hard as Jim Herd worked at making it otherwise, Ric Flair was still "the man" in WCW. Sting may have beaten the man, but it was obvious to everybody that he did not become that man. There should be a new award to describe Terry Funk. He is incredible.

MARK BROWN: I do not like the direction of Flair's career over the past year, but I hope there will be at least one more title reign as payback. Funk just continues to amaze and will hopefully be more visible in 1991. Luger, while not a technical superstar, did the clean job when needed and probably deserves a chance with the top strap.

JEFFREY COHEN: For the past decade, real wrestling has meant Ric Flair. Sure, one could make an argument that this was a down year, getting stale early and finally beaten and buried in tag matches. But the enthusiasm of fans towards him has remained consistent. In anything, his presence has been missed in NWA main events.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST #1: Wrestler of the Year, which goes to the best representative of the sport. Still, no doubt in my mind, it is Hulk Hogan. Honorable mentions to Randy Savage and Jimmy Hart. I realize Jimmy Hart is not a wrestler, but he busts his ass promoting the WWF.

TIM PRAMAS: Hulk Hogan is the greatest representative because he consistently preaches a positive, wholesome message.

JOSEPH MARGOSIAN: Ric Flair: If the man is breathing and still wrestling, he will have my vote forever.

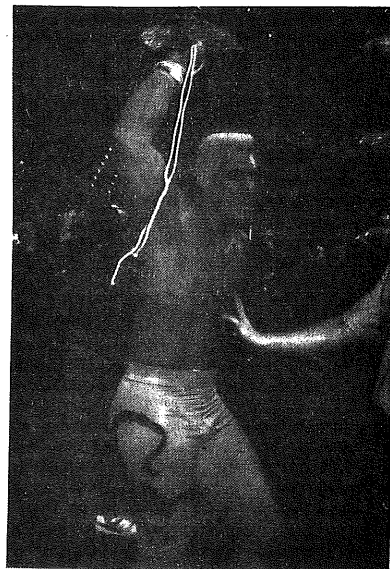
ANDY STOWELL: Hogan, DiBiase, and Hennig. Has to be Hulk Hogan for a lot of reasons. Number one, he put Warrior over cleanly. Then he went to Japan and wrestled Hansen to a fantastic match in front of a tough crowd. He then went into a hot feud with Earthquake and even got Tugboat over in the process. Also, he has proven to McMahon how valuable he is. Tie for second is Hennig and DiBiase. Both were outstanding, giving great interviews and carrying a lot of dead weight and getting them over. Slight edge to Hennig, especially for re-winning the I-C Title.

IAN GOODWIN: Flair is still the best in the ring. Hennig was great, but inconsistent. Arn Anderson is very underrated.

LOST NAME #1: I would almost automatically pick Ric Flair. Even with his downgrading by WCW, he still is a better representative of the WCW style than anyone in the promotion. Luger was second mainly due to his matches with Flair, plus, I think he is more important to WCW in the long run than Sting. Hulk Hogan is the biggest star in wrestling today and is still very important to the WWF. His performance while losing at Wrestlemania cemented his reputation.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Nobody represents the sport better than Ric Flair. He lives and breaths wrestling and if anybody's matches can make you suspend your beliefs of the sport being worked, Flair is the man.

Ric Flair had a down year, and possibly the worst year of his career since become the perennial NWA World Champion. But even Flair's worst year is better than



STING RETAINS TITLE AT HALLOWEEN HAVOC (By Keller)

virtually every other wrestler's best year. Flair's series with Luger was excellent, although a bit predictable. Flair's series with JVD and doing jobs for him to set up the matches showed that Flair is a company man out for the best of the gates as opposed to what is best for him. His series with Sting saw matches ranging from ** to ****1/2. He ended the year teaming with Arn Anderson in great matches against Doom. Flair gets third place.

Hulk Hogan gets second. Hogan's clean job to Ultimate Warrior at Wrestlemania should have indicated no one is too good to do a job. Unfortunately, it does not appear the lesson was learned throughout wrestling. Hogan continued to be the representative of the sport as far as mainstream media and fans were concerned. His matches with Curt Hennig were at times fantastic. His series against Earthquake was not classic, but it was dramatic with the retirement angle, and Hogan played the part well. Hogan gets my second place vote.

First place goes to Arn Anderson, who in my opinion represented this sport better than anyone else. His interviews are among the most consistently entertaining, they are always believable, and certainly intimidating. He was injured for much of the first half of the year, but upon his return, he had good matches with Paul Orndorff and soon moved into the infamous series with Flair against Doom. He has a natural physique and looks relatively normal. Despite those ironic handicaps, he was one of the most respected wrestlers in 1990 by all kinds of fans.

OUTSTANDING WORKER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|------------------|-----|
| 1) RIC FLAIR | 26% |
| 2) CURT HENNIG | 21% |
| 3) BOBBY EATON | 14% |
| 4) SCOTT STEINER | 9% |
| 5) TERRY FUNK | 6% |

6-10) Bret Hart, Ted DiBiase, Lex Luger, Arn Anderson, Ricky Rice.)

1989: Ric Flair (Terry Funk, Ricky Steamboat, Great Muta)

READER COMMENTS:

ERIC KROL: Bobby Eaton has finally made it to the top of the U.S. scene. While not in the main events, he always turns in a great performance whether it is at a PPV or house show in front of 1000 fans.

ANDY STOWELL: DiBiase, Hennig, and Luger. This is really hard to pick when you are not allowed to include the

Japanese, especially in this category. Hennig took the best bumps, but DiBiase has the better workrate. Special mention to Lex Luger who deserves a lot of credit for being so loyal to the NWA. He had to carry the whole face side and then never got to win the big one. Teaming with Vader is a joke. Should have let Luger become champion.

LOST NAME #1: Again, Flair almost automatically. His all-around ability in and out of the ring speaks for itself. His performance at Starrcade '90 was very underrated. The master of this era. Bobby Eaton is arguably the best flyer in the US, plus the fact that he can wrestle or brawl with the best. Like Flair, Eaton has transcended his role as a heel. I have been high on Brad Armstrong for years, especially since his performance against Barry Windham at Clash II. It is nearly obscene that Brad has not received any kind of major push. I think that he could become an excellent heel and would fit in with The Horsemen better than Sid.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: There is still no one who puts out more in this business than "The Man," Ric Flair. He has bled, sweat, and paid the price as well as, many times, single-handedly kept interest in this, "What we know to be the greatest sport in the world."

IAN GOODWIN: Scott Steiner is amazing, period. Flair and Arn were their usual tremendous selves.

TIM PRAMAS: "Mr. Perfect" would have made the list, but for his matches with Texas Tornado. Tito Santana is underrated.

RANDY RAY: Bobby Eaton was more consistent this year than Ric Flair in the quality of his ring work. Curt Hennig deserves a top three spot for great ring work with the likes of Kerry Von Erich and the fact that he is one of the few that gives it his all for the WWF.

MARK BROWN: Scott Steiner is the future for WCW. If not rushed, a singles program with Flair could well set WCW up with its superstar of the nineties.

NAME WITHHELD #1: A toss up between Bret Hart who always looks good, even at the Survivor Series one day after his brother died, and Curt Hennig who also always looks good. Flair seems to have lost his edge. His age may be catching up to him.

Third place goes to Scott Steiner, who excited crowds all year in matches with The Horsemen, Doom, The Samoan Swat Team, the The Freebirds. His work earned him enough respect to be considered the future star in wrestling. He did not earn that rep through interviews.

Second is a tie between Bobby Eaton and Bret Hart. Both men were the leaders on their respective teams. Bret Hart's execution of every move he attempts is polished. Eaton was just a hell of a worker, on the mat or in the air.

Ric Flair has got to win this. It was down year without a lot of classic matches, but his series with Luger, Sting, and Doom were three feuds not topped by anyone.

Honorable mention to Terry Funk and Jerry Lynn, both of whom I never saw in a bad match this year. Lynn is still inexperienced, but his matches with Lightning Kid and Ricky Rice in Minnesota had fans on their feet every time. Funk just did not wrestle enough to earn a top three finish, but his bumps, antics, and pure in-ring work has not fallen a bit in the last few years, and if anything, has improved.

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) RICK & SCOTT STEINER 43%
- 2) BOBBY EATON & STAN LANE 27%
- 3) BUTCH REED & RON SIMMONS 15%
- 4) SEAN MICHAELS & MARTY JANETTY 12%
- 5) BRET HART & JIM NEIDHART 8%

6-10) Steve Armstrong & Tracy Smothers, The Legion of Doom, Demolition Axe & Smash & Crush, Jerry Saggs & Brian Nobbs, Ric Flair & Arn Anderson & Barry Windham.

1989: Arn Anderson & Tully Blanchard (Michaels & Janetty, Steiners, Legion of Doom)

1988: Eaton & Lane (Bobby Fulton & Tommy Rogers, Legion of Doom, Anderson & Blanchard)

READER COMMENTS:

GABRIEL DAIGLE: For gutwrechingbellytobellybearhugsuplexingoffthetopropedDTing to frankensteinstinerliningblockbustingtiltawhirling explosions, there are no others. Rick & Scott Steiner stand alone at the top of the tag team mountain and will until they give Scotty his World Title. Let us hear it for Doom. A rejuvenated Butch Reed, an exceptional heel in Ron Simmons, and a superb manager in Dancing Godfather Sugar Ray Theodore R. "Teddy" Long, made for a great combination.

MARK BROWN: I would not argue with any of the top three in any order, Steiners, Midnighters, Rockers, but I went with Midnighters because it looks like it may be a while before we get to see that combination again. Too bad for us.

JOSEPH MARGOSIAN: Doom, as the sheer impact they had on the wrestling world was phenomenal. Good workrate, good power wrestling, and great believability.

JEFFREY COHEN: The Midnight Express fell into that Ole Anderson netherland in 1990. First he gave them tag team belts, only to strip them in the most meaningless manner possible - before a house card at the Meadowlands in August. if it was an effort to pop the house, it worked. But the return card was five months later, plenty of time to come up with some other local angle. It was easy to see why frustration tore this talented team apart, possibly for good.

IAN GOODWIN: Steiners are in a different galaxy. They are plain scary and seem to make up the moves as they go a long. No one close. Top rope DDT is scary.

ANDY STOWELL: Has got to be Doom for a number of reasons. They went from a dead gimmick to the best team in the world. Along the way, they beat The Road Warrior, Steiners, Rock & Roll Express, and The Horsemen, all of the big tag teams for the NWA in the last few years. Bitch Reed is a solid wrestler who could be the answer to all their problems, but they are too stupid to push him. Ron Simmons is a natural babyface. Did you see the BET interview. They came across like credible athletes; the same as Tyson or Jordan or any other pro. Would be fantastic PR for the NWA.

LOST NAME #1: The Midnight Express is the best tag team in the U.S. They have been involved in more great matches than anyone. Plus, they made squash matches seem exciting. The Steiners are inching closer to the level occupied by The Midnight Express. They are capable of becoming perhaps the best tag team in the world. The Hart Foundation is just about the only reason I ever watch any WWF telecasts. Bret Hart is great.

ERIC KROL: The Steiners have introduced new moves, have natural charisma, and are the most over team since the Roadies.

RANDY RAY: The Steiners are incredible. Their squash matches are more exciting than most matches on recent Clashes. They even managed to turn The Nasty Boys into superstars.

A tie for third goes to The Southern Boys and The Rockers. The Southern Boys' few matches with The Midnight Express showed they are an elite team held back by a hideous gimmick. The Rockers match against The Hart Foundation on a Saturday Nights Main Event was the NBC match of the year. The Rockers may be the best team in wrestling and in 1991 their push may reflect that boast.

Second place goes to The Steiner Brothers. The moves these two invented this year rivalled the best Midnight Express year when the Double Goozle and Divorce Court, among other finishers, were introduced. Their top rope devastating power moves, their awesome suplexes, and Scott's Frankenstein, combined with a good work ethic made them the hottest act in wrestling at time.

But first place has to go to the 1990 Cinderella story: Doom. As I wrote in the Torch Summer Annual, "Doom could surprise people by winning this at year's end." Butch Reed and Ron Simmons grew more this year as wrestlers than El



BY RYAN JONES

Gigante during his growth spurt. Reed was a hot rookie caught by the sophomore jinx, disenchanted in the WWF, and not renewed while in the NWA. Simmons was a young talent who faced Murphy's Law - "When Something Can Go Wrong, It Will" - more times than he cares to remember. They were united as Doom, but placed under masks. They entered 1990 fresh off of a triple loss in Starrcade '89. But then they lost to The Steiners on the first Clash of the year, Teddy Long became their manager, and they won the World Tag Team Titles a couple months later at "Capital Combat." Their celebration interview was one of the bright moments of the year. Their matches that followed with The Rock & Roll Express were good, although the size mismatch tested credibility at times. But their final series of the year with Ric Flair and Arn Anderson, and their final big match against Barry Windham & Arn Anderson at Starrcade '90 secured their position as tag team of the year. Their brawl at Starrcade '90 will be replayed at video tape parties for years to come.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|
| 1) STEVE AUSTIN | 56% |
| 2) EL GIGANTE | 8% |
| 3) J.W. STORM (JEFF WARNER) | 8% |
| 4) LIGHTNING KID (SEAN WALTMAN) * | 5% |
| 5) ALLEN IRON EAGLE | 5% |
- 6-10) Chris Chavis, Chris Von Erich, Joey Maggs, and of course, Gary Young! (* - Waltman still eligible next year because he did not work full-time for a major group in 1990)

1989: WAYNE BLOOM (Dustin Rhodes, Larry Cameron, Mike Enos)

1988: SCOTT STEINER (Ricky Rice, Derrick Dukes, Todd Morton)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: Steve Austin will have a long and successful career. He is just too charismatic not to. It is a shame their was not a better crop of rookies this year so it would not look like he won by default. By the way, Wade, if anybody votes for Chris Von Erich, I think you should consider dropping them as subscribers (grin).

LOST NAME #1: The only rookie that I saw who I knew was one is Steve Austin. Chris Adams is not a bad judge of talent. Austin seems to be perfect as a heel and has potential. Give him some more seasoning, then send him to WCW or the WWF. Better yet, send him to Japan and see what they can do with him.

I picked Steve Austin as Rookie of the Mid-Year and he gets my vote again. Austin has the look and the raw ability to go a long way. Chris Adams had a lot to do with Austin being recognized as so good because he wrestled him so much.

Second place goes to J.W. Storm, whose in-ring personality grew a lot this year as he worked full-time for the first time in his career. His improvement from his PWA days was tremendous. At this rate of improvement, he will be making good money for many years.

To be eligible for this award, you must work for a promotion that runs "full-time," such as WCW, WWF, Portland, or Memphis. As soon as Lightning Kid Sean Waltman and Jerry Lynn surface nationally, they will be candidates for that year's rookie honors. I am sure, just as Kid and Lynn were impressive this year, there are other up-and-comers in other regional promotions which we will hear about in 1991 and beyond.

PROMOTION OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING (NWA) | 28% |
| 2) UNITED STATES WRESTLING ASSOCIATION | 25% |
| 3) WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION | 24% |
| 4) PORTLAND WRESTLING | 3% |
| 5) PRO WRESTLING AMERICA | 3% |
- 6-10) Tri-State Wrestling, Ladies Professional Wrestling Association, American Wrestling Association, Professional Wrestling From Florida, Texas Wrestling Federation.

1989: NWA (WWF, Portland, PWA)

1988: WWF (NWA, CWA, CWF)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: The "big three" really sucked this year. No more AWA, the WWF ring work got worse if that is possible, and the NWA became WCW and got the impression that any 300-plus pound roided up bodybuilder can wrestle. Of the indies, the PNW was the best.

TIM PRAMAS: The WWF is the best. All others are WWF wanna-be's and those trying to be different from the WWF will be inferior to it.

RANDY NORDQUIST: USWA, NWA, and Portland. While the

USWA did not pull large crowds, they provided the most interesting storylines and personalities. It was sad to see the NWA stumble this year after providing excellent products in 1989.

NAME WITHHELD BY REQUEST #1: I work at a radio station in Southern Ontario and was able to attend a couple of pre-Wrestlemania VI press conferences at SkyDome in Toronto. I could not get over how accessible these guys were. All three were personable and frank about the business. It was not all aimed at the "marks." Hogan talked about his early years in Memphis, while Hart talked about the "classic feud" with Andy Kaufman. Savage was a little leery of discussing his relationship with Elizabeth or Lanny, but generally speaking, he did his best to promote wrestling and not just the WWF. All three were also able to do public service ads for an upcoming telethon. It was promotion at its finest. WCW could learn a big lesson here in self-promotion.

It is for this reason that the WWF gets my nod as the only promotion of the year. Yes, I watch WCW, but what is the point if nobody in the mainstream gives a damn. Recently WCW has begun to promote here in Southern Ontario and have done a brutal job. The only promotion we get are newspaper ads and brief mentions on television. Each time the WWF has an event, I receive at least two press releases, press passes, tickets to give away on the air, various WWF merchandise, and access to Jack Tunney and his office for interviews.

Meanwhile, the Canadian promoter for WCW promised all kinds of interviews and tickets to give away on air when they first came to town, but did not deliver. Even he himself is not available for publicity interviews anymore. How can WCW expect to survive based only on hardcore support. You need to broaden your base and make yourself available to mainstream media, too. WCW often complains about the amount of air time given to the WWF on Arsenio Hall. I have the feeling if Arsenio was to offer then equal time, WCW would screw that up too. But then again, one only needs to look at the Family Feuds that had WCW wrestlers on it to see that maybe it is for the best they do not get more exposure. Turner is a media giant. Surely he could hire somebody to train these guys in the art of representing a positive image.

What WCW does inside the ring means nothing. What they really need to do is get their name into the mainstream media. Having a better product than the WWF will not mean anything if nobody outside the hardcore fans know about it.

IAN GOODWIN: Despite all their numerous problems, the NWA still holds one thing over Titan: Wrestling.

LOST NAME #1: This was a difficult one. My heart wants to say WCW but they have too many problems. I really dislike the WWF, but I must admit that they seem focused on their goals as a promotion. They do what they do better than anyone in the U.S. I voted the USWA second because of the wild things that they try in the way of angles. They go out on a limb with their creativity and Eddie seems to get these guys to do anything. WCW still has the best overall wrestling in this country, but that is even slipping.

World Championship Wrestling gets first, but just as importantly, second worst. While the wrestling they presented a notch above all competition, their management and booking problems hurt them tremendously.

World Wrestling Federation gets second best, but just as important, worst. Their organization was tremendous, their



promoting ability was state of the art, and their mainstream recognition was tops in the business. But with all of this, not to even attempt to provide a quality nightly product by hirings based on talent and ability, they are like the awesome looking sportscar with a 2.2, 4 cylinder engine. The car company may make the best looking and best selling car, but without an engine, it does not matter.

Third best and third worst goes to USWA. Their storylines and hardcore action, both in Texas and Tennessee was worth watching. Their abuse of females and internal turmoil hurt their standing.

MATCH OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) MIDNIGHT EXPRESS VS. SOUTHERN BOYS 17%
(Baltimore, 7/7/90)
- 2) HULK HOGAN VS. ULTIMATE WARRIOR 16%
(Toronto, 4/1/90)
- 3) NASTY BOYS VS. THE STEINERS 15%
(Chicago, 10/27/90)
- 4) RIC FLAIR VS. STING 9%
(Baltimore, 7/7/90)
- 5) RIC FLAIR VS. LEX LUGER 7%
(Greensboro, 2/25/90)
- 6-10) Doom vs. Horsemen (12/16 St. Louis), Terry Funk vs. Stan Hansen (New Jersey), Midnight Express vs. Rock & Roll Express (2/25 Greensboro), Ricky Rice vs. Jerry Lynn (9/15 Minneapolis), Ric Flair vs. Brian Pillman (TBS).

1989: Flair vs. Steamboat [2/20 Chi] (Flair vs. Steamboat [4-2 New Orleans], Flair vs. Steamboat [5-7 Nashville], Flair vs. Funk [11-15 New York])

1988: Flair vs. Sting [3/27 Greensboro] (Fantastics vs. Midnights [3/27 Greensboro], Flair vs. Luger [7/10 Baltimore], Fantastics vs. Midnights [4/26])

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: Hogan vs. Warrior was not a great wrestling match, but it was a great wrestling event. Flair vs. Sting matches were disappointing in my opinion. Sting's refusal to sell half the time really cheapened them.

TIM PRAMAS: Hogan vs. Warrior was the most important match of the year and also the most dramatic. It is the one all non-hardcores like myself have been talking about. Rice vs. Lynn gets my vote for your excellent descriptions of their bouts.

ANDY STOWELL: Steiners vs. Nasty Boys at Havoc was the best blood feud of the year. The off-the-top bulldog was a heart stopper. Jerry Saggs sold the chair shot effectively and Scott Steiner gets beaten up, better than any babyface in the business. The angle after the match, where Saggs bushwacked Scott at the interview stage added even more heat and kept the Nasties over as bad guys. Second to the Midnight Express vs. Rock & Roll Express at WrestleWar 90. Four guys wrestling like they were stuck in an opening match and wanted to show up everyone else. Four guys who looked like they had done the match a hundred times. Four guys who wrestled like their jobs were on the line. Guess what? Third goes to Buddy Landel vs. Brian Pillman at Clash XIII, two guys acting like their booker just got fired and they were free at last.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Laugh all you want, but nothing all year came close to the Eddie Gilbert vs. Jeff Jarrett match from October 29.

LOST NAME #1: Doom-Horsemen at Starrcade '90, hands down. The best brawl-style match I have seen in five or six years. Anybody who disagrees, I will take you on myself. Flair vs. Luger at WrestleWar '90 was probably the best match the two of them ever had. Great intensity. Their match at Clash XII was technically nearly as good.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: For drama, heat, action, workrate, and genuine crowd intensity, it is definitely the Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys at the Bash. It was just as great on TV as it was live. The "karate" face-off between Smothers and Lane was a thing of beauty. This would have made a great longterm feud.

MARK BROWN: Having attended Starrcade 90 in person, I have to go with the Street Fight. Incredible brawling from four great workers and I might be one of the few who enjoyed the finish. Nobody deserved to have to do the job after destroying one another with such intensity.

Third place goes to The Steiners vs. The Nasty Boys. I was lucky enough to sit front row for this match in Chicago and more than once, the railing flew into me as a wrestler was thrown into it. The crowd intensity along with brutal action was tough to top.

But I believe Doom vs. Windham & Anderson from Starrcade '90 did top the Steiners-Nastys match. Just a great brawl front start to finish with some of the top wrestlers in the

business.

First place goes to, appropriately enough, the best match I saw this year: The Midnight Express vs. The Southern Boys. The match was a prototype perfect tag team match with every emotion, high spot, comedy antics, and false finish possible. I sat front row for this match, also, and was so into the match, the film I loaded into my camera mid-way through the match was loaded improperly, so no photos were taken of the last half of the match.

Honorable mention to Hogan vs. Warrior at Wrestlemania. The most dramatic, meaningful, effective match of the year. A lot could be learned by virtually every wrestler in this sport from that match. But to be match of the year, the psychology can be there, but wrestling action has to be there, too. This match only had the psychology.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) JIM CORNETTE 40%
- 2) BOBBY HEENAN 34%
- 3) SENSATIONAL SHERRI 17%
- 4) TEDDY LONG 12%
- 5) PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY 5%
- 6-10) Jimmy Hart, Golden Idol Mark Allen, Woman, Percy Pringle, Downtown Bruno.

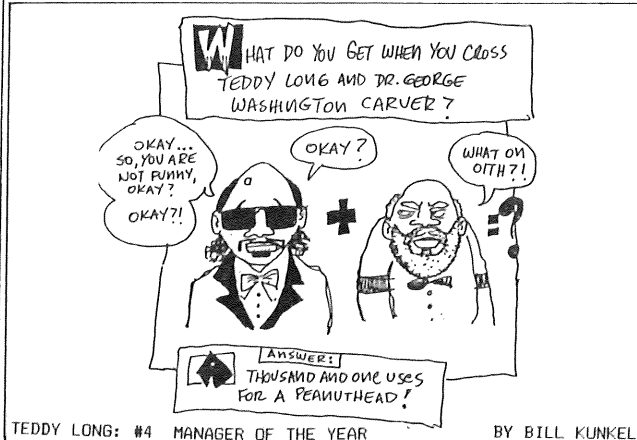
1989: Cornette (Heenan, Dangerously, Sherri)

1988: Cornette (Dangerously, Heenan, Elizabeth)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: Bad year for managers as Cornette slipped into obscurity and Paul E. spent most of the time as a commentator. Heenan continues to come up with some great lines.

ERIC KROL: Cornette takes the cake again. Teddy Long was good in spots, but too inconsistent.

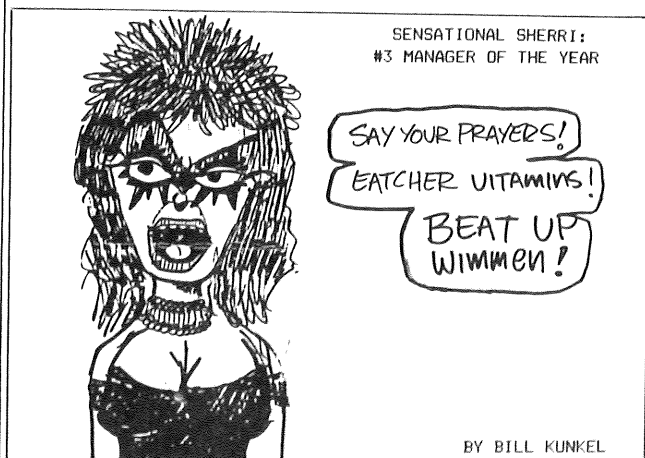


TEDDY LONG: #4 MANAGER OF THE YEAR

BY BILL KUNKEL

IAN GOODWIN: Heenan is the best. He single-handedly sold the Bossman feud. No other manager elicits that reaction from the crowd. Besides, what other manager can take great bumps and have a decent match. Way better than the overrated Cornette.

LOST NAME #1: I have enjoyed Bobby Heenan for over 15 years and, like a fine whisky, he gets better with age. Jim Cornette is Heenan's heir apparent. Any promotion with Cornette, no matter what role he plays, is much better off. I picked Teddy Long third because Paul E. didn't manage for most of the year. Long is much easier to swallow than Slick.



BY BILL KUNKEL

UNOFFICIAL TORCH

ELYSE ZOIS:

-TOTAL DISASTER AWARD: Earthquake
 -BEST LIAR AWARD: The 217 pound Buddy Rose
 -IF ONLY HE COULD LEARN TO WRESTLE: El Gigante
 -WRESTLER DESIGNED BY COMMITTEE: Black Scorpion
 -MOST OFFENSIVE IDEA IN DECADES: Sgt. Slaughter and General Adnon.
 -TURKEY OF THE YEAR: Gobbledly Gooker
 -GIMMICK THAT LITERALLY LAID AN EGG: The Gobbledly Gooker
 -I WOULD LIKE TO MEET HIS BROTHER: Animal
 -MILLION DOLLAR CLONE: Michael Wallstreet
 -MOTHER'S DAY AWARD: Big Bossman
 -EVERYBODY'S GOT A PRICE AWARD: Saba Simba
 -WORST HAIRDO: Davey Boy Smith
 -FOOT IN THE MOUTH AWARD: Bobby Heenan
 -MAN WHOSE TIME HAS COME... AND GONE: Brother Love
 -HE WILL BE PUSHED DOWN OUR THROATS UNTIL WE LOVE HIM: Ultimate Warrior
 -LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, AWARD FOR THE LONGEST SENTENCE I EVER READ (AND IT MADE SENSE, TOO): Wade Keller in Issue #89

MARK BROWN:

-N.R.A. SECOND AMENDMENT AWARD: To Missy Hyatt, for packing a pair of 38's wherever she goes.....

[Editor's Note: We interrupt this feature for an E.R.A.-like insert. The following is an actual "Torch Unofficial Award" submitted for print by Rob Wu, so just to be fair...

-MOST PROTRUDING DICK OF THE YEAR: Curt Hennig.....

We now return you to Mark Brown's list.]

-BEST PERFORMANCE IN A SUPPORTING ROLE: Ric Flair, for carrying everybody from JYD to Sting to the entire promotion.

TIM PRAMAS: Heenan is hilarious and really helped get Mr. Perfect, Rick Rude, and The Big Bossman over. Jimmy Hart generated a lot of heat for the Earthquake-Hogan bouts and made it almost respectable.

JOSEPH MARGOSIAN: Bobby Heenan is highly underrated. He is very humorous and quick-witted. I am probably the only non-relative of Heenan who enjoyed the Bobby "The Brain" Heenan Show.

ANDY STOWELL: Heenan, Dangerously, and Sherri. Heenan's Bossman stuff was classic, except he came off too much like a wimp when Rude got suspended. He should have sent the whole family into the ring to ambush Bossman. Paul E. was so brilliant the one time I saw him live. He would run to all four sides of the ring, finding someone at ringside to work off of while keeping the entire arena heated up. Too bad he is misused now.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: As long as he stays in this profession, it will be near impossible to not give this to Jim Cornette. He may not have gotten as much exposure in his managerial capacity this year, but he still proved to be number one. A very, very, very close second is Sherri

-BLACK SCORPION MAGIC AWARD: Ole Anderson, for booking Clash matches that caused any semblance of wrestling to completely disappear.

-BLACK SCORPION MAGIC, PART II: Our friend, Ole again, for the "Hand is Quicker Than The Eye" disappearance of 2/3 of the world's best tag team.

-STEREOTYPE ELIMINATION AWARD: Teddy Long and Doom, for getting over with strong natural personalities and being outstanding workers as well. Bonus points for doing so under a booker who may believe Rocky King to be Martin's son.

-STEREOTYPE ENHANCEMENT AWARD: Rocky King and Thunderbolt Patterson - tie - for different reasons, neither of which requires any explanation.

NAME LOST BY EDITOR #2:

-MOST QUIXOTIC IDEA OF THE YEAR: Kunkel's suggestion that WCW follow a path towards credibility by pushing skilled wrestlers over steroid oafs. Sid drools, okay?

-BEST ELEVENTH HOUR RELIEF JOB: Barry Windham. Just when you started to think The Horsemen were about as relevant as the Dudes with Attitudes, along comes Barry and things start happening.

-BEST TORCH COVER PHOTOS: Windham as Substitute Sting (great documentation); 2) Butch Reed (the kids face in the background is a priceless mixture of pride and awe); Crusher Norton and Foe (great comedy).

JOHN ALMEIDA:

-THE "HEY GUYS, I'M DOING THE BEST RODDY PIPER IMPERSONATION I CAN!" AWARD: Paul E. Dangerously during big matches when he is excited; he is also eligible for the "Undescended Testicle Award for Cracking Voices."

-BEST MOONS: Tie between Ric Flair and Rick Rude.

-"ARE THEY ARE AREN'T THEY" AWARD: The Freebirds

-BLACK SCORPION MEMORIAL DISAPPEARING ACT: AWA

-THE "BOY, DOESN'T HE LOOK LIKE A CHAMPION WHEN YOU PUSH THE PAUSE BUTTON!" AWARD: Sid Vicious.

Martel. She is just so much fun to watch. She will consistently make a match better just with her presence. Third goes to a very funny and topical Teddy Long. Always good for a laugh and someone you can really see people hating.

RANDY NORDQUIST: While Cornette remains the benchmark, Tojo Yamamoto gets third for an incredibly demented interview on WMC in which he called Tessa a "sceptic tank woman with a bulldog face!" Heenan had his best year in a while and gets second. Teddy Long was also great quite a bit.

JEFFREY COHEN: While Jim Cornette was a good talker and his team held titles for a few months, Bobby Heenan remained the premier manager with tag champs and an Intercontinental Champ. Next year I predict he is going to become really stale, so here is to ya' Brain.

MARK BROWN: Cornette remains the standard by which others must be measured, but Long has gotten over well as a realistic character.

There is no question in my mind that Sensational Sherri Martel was the manager of the year. She was the not the non-wrestler entertainer of the year or the comedian of the year, but no one was better at doing what a manager should do. She got heat on Savage, she worked absurdly hard at ringside, and was easy to dislike. What more can you ask?

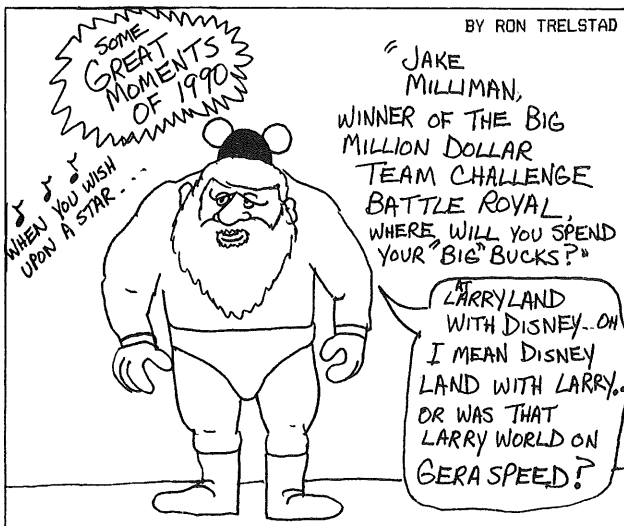
Second goes to Bobby Heenan for being funny all year, creating new material for the hilarious Ode to Bossman's Mother series, and his trainer-type character during Rick Rude's training for his matches with Ultimate Warrior. Heenan had an excellent year and was consistently good in many different roles.

Third goes to Jim Cornette, who was buried for the entire year by WCW, was not involved in any really good angles, and was not featured on TV as in past years. But anyone who can shadow box with Nick Patrick like Cornette did at WrestleWar deserved third place. That showdown with Patrick was more than Jimmy Hart did all year.

ANNOUNCER OF THE YEAR

1990:

1) JIM ROSS	48%
2) TONY SCHIAVONE	17%
3) VINCE MCMAHON	10%
4) LANCE RUSSELL	6%
5) CRAIG JOHNSON	4%
6-10) Gorilla Monsoon, Chris Cruise, Gary Capetta, Bob Caudle, Gordon Solie.	



AWARDS

By: The Readers

-OVER LIKE A LEAD BALLOON AWARD: Legion of Doom, "Aaaahhhrrrrggg, What a Crock!"

-BEST OBNOXIOUS LAUGHTER: Million Dollar Man

-SUPER DAVE OSBORNE AWARD FOR SELF-INFLICTED DESTRUCTION: Cactus Jack

-THE "WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES" AWARD: Hulk Hogan

-JON LOVITZ SINCERITY AWARD: Herb Abrams (Gonna' have Adrian Adonis headline next year, Herbie?)

-VERBALLY CONSTIPATED (i.e. stock-phrase city) AWARD: Gorilla Monsoon.

-THE GENE OKERLUND "YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!" AWARD: Kerry Von Erich winning the WWF Intercontinental belt from Mr. Perfect after being in the WWF for about three minutes (and keeping it for about as long.)

-THE MAURICE CHEVALIER "THANK HEAVEN FOR LITTLE GIRLS" AWARD - TIE: JUICER AND CHRIS CHAMPION.

KEVIN WITTS:

-HAIRIEST WRESTLER: Dutch Mantell

-BLOB OF THE YEAR: JYD, Sheik, Norman

-BEST AT SCREWING UP INTERVIEWS: Sting, Missy Hyatt.

-BEST INTRO MUSIC: Doom

-WORST INTRO MUSIC: Earthquake

-BEST HAIR COLOR CHANGE: Bill Irwin

-WORST HAIR COLOR CHANGE: Greg Valentine

-MOST HAIR COLOR CHANGE: Missy Hyatt

-MOST WRESTLING ALIAS' THIS YEAR: Dave Sierra

-COOLEST RING ATTIRE: Sting's "Bash" Jacket

-DUMBEST RING ATTIRE: Tugboat

-CRO-MAGNON AWARD: Jimmy Snuka

-BEST "SELL-JOB" ON A PIN: Buster Douglas

-GIRL SCOUTS OF AMERICA OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD: The Juicer.

-CELEBRITY IMPOSTER AWARDS: Steve Armstrong as "Woody" of Cheers; Jim Duggan as "Cowardly Lion"; El Gigante as "Andre the Giant"; Vince McMahon as "P.T. Barnum"; Jim Herd as "Vince McMahon."

GLENN LEONBERGER:

-WORST GIMMICK: Gobbledy Gooker

-WORST PPV: No Holds Barred: Movie Plus Match

-THE "PLEASE LET THIS END" AWARD: Sting-Scorpion Feud After Halloween Havoc.

-BEST TALKER: Larry Zbyszko

SIR MICHAEL:

-MIS-MANAGER OF THE YEAR: Turner Broadcasting Systems, Inc. - Why is this company in the wrestling business?

-HEAD-UP HIS *** AWARD: Mr. Jim Herd - For his explanation concerning The Juicer situation.

-REST IN PEACE AWARD: American Wrestling Association - What a shame.

-THANKSGIVING TURKEY AWARD: The Gobbledy-Gooker - Self-explanatory.

-MOST POPULAR HEELS AWARD: The Four Horsemen - Drew more cheers than some of the faces do.

-MOST HATED FACE AWARD: Kerry Von Erich - I do not know anyone who cheers for him.

-EARTHQUAKEMANIA AWARD: Iben Browning - Is not involved in wrestling, but caused more heat in five states than Hulk Hogan.

-HAIRIEST WRESTLER AWARD: Dutch Mantell - Is he related to George Steele or Bob Geigel?

-WOMAN OF THE YEAR: Dedicated to the unknown women wearing a black satin mini-skirt and matching black, jacket-style top who has a nice set. She caused my friends and I, too, missed about three minutes of ring action at Starrcade, which was worth it.

-MAN OF THE YEAR: Mr. Harry White - For getting me turned back onto wrestling and leading me to the business.

-FIRST ANNUAL ST. LOUIS WRESTLING HALL OF FAME AWARD: Sam Muchnick, Pat O'Connor, King Kong Bruiser Brody, Lou Thesz, Dick the Bruiser.

-GREAT WRESTLING HOPE AWARD: Joe Pedicino and the Global Wrestling Federation.

1989: Jim Ross (Schiavone, Russell, McMahon)
1988: Jim Ross (Jesse Ventura, Russell, Schiavone)

READER COMMENTS:

ERIC KROL: Ross wins again because at the big events he raises his level a notch. I am amazed he has not lost his voice yet.

ANDY STOWELL: Russell, McMahon, and Cruise. On Sunday mornings, a local station runs World Wide and Pro back to back. Used to be a great two hours. Thanks to Schiavone, it is a great hour and an embarrassment. Cudos to Lance, though, for at least trying to keep me interested in the NWA. Also, Vince is the best, especially at SummerSlam. Wish he would always call the big cards.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Jim Ross, Craig Johnson, and Dave Brown. What makes Ross so impressive is his continual refinement of his craft. He is always changing and growing. I like Craig Johnson's enthusiastic "gee wiz" delivery. Dave Brown is comfortable to watch, but needs to be more reactive to angles.

LOST NAME #1: Jim Ross is the best play-by-play man in the business. His knowledge of wrestling and his fluid style make for a very enjoyable experience. I liken him to my all-time favorite announcer, Larry Matysik, former Wrestling At The Chase announcer. Tony Schiavone runs a close second to Ross and may even be his peer. I picked Lance Russell primarily out of respect for his longevity as an announcer. I have seen a few examples of his work in Memphis and was impressed, especially since it is done live.

TIM PRAMAS: I think I might start a Gorilla Monsoon fan club.

JOSEPH MARGOSIAN: Jim Ross followed by Lord Alfred Hayes. No, I am not joking and I am not crazy. Great analysis and covers wrestling seriously. Gives credit to the athletic abilities of the combatants. Once again, it is too bad that he has to wallow in the disgrace of the WWF.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: He may have gotten somewhat cliché; he may have hyped up some guys to be studs when they were dogs. But the fact is, Jim Ross rules the world... of announcing and I still do not see anybody else who compares.

Third place goes to Lance Russell and Gorilla Monsoon. Both serve their promotion in a B-level role and do a good job. I wish they would pull Russell off of the 900 line

for one of these Clashes and let Russell present his unique style at least once to the TBS audience. Monsoon is consistent and works well off of Heenan.

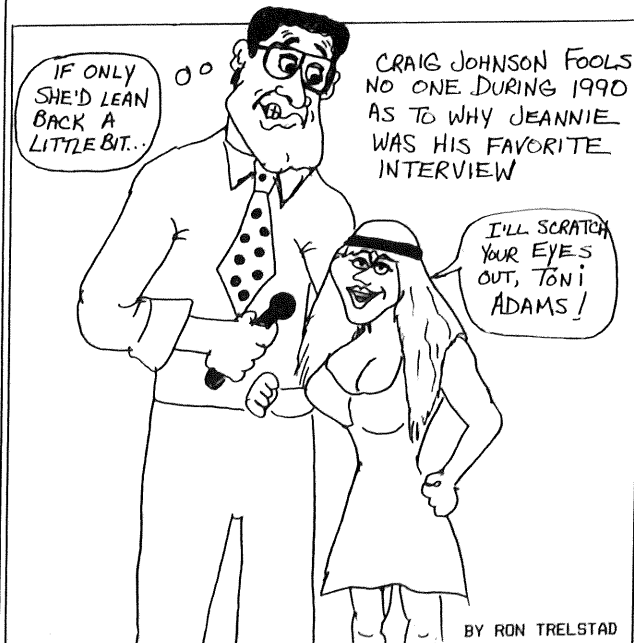
Second place goes to Tony Schiavone who has shown signs of boredom and signs of renewed enthusiasm. He is a lot like Barry Windham in that he is fighting the curse the WWF puts on some people. Schiavone, though, still has great pipes and gets over angles better than virtually anyone.

As usual, Jim Ross was the best. He adds credibility to pro wrestling. He adds a dimension to matches most other announcers cannot. When he is genuinely excited, no one is better. The better the wrestling he is calling, the better his announcing is; note Chi-Town Rumble and Ross's call of Flair-Steamboat.

COLOR COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1) JESSE VENTURA | 24% |
| 2) PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY | 21% |



BY RON TRELSTAD

- 3) RODDY PIPER 12%
- 4) BOBBY HEENAN 11%
- 5) DUTCH MANTEL 10%
- 6-10) Jim Cornette, Terry Funk, Jerry Lawler, Kevin Sullivan, Michael Hayes & Jimmy Garvin)

1989: Ventura (Cornette, Hayes, Dangerously)

READER COMMENTS:

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Hands down to Jim Cornette. Always provided a different view from Ross', yet meshed with him perfectly. The king of the one-liners. The NWA had better hope they can work something out with him in the future, because he is the best in the business. Not a too distant second was Paul E. He, Cornette, and Dutch provided WCW fans with almost as many laughs as their company's management.

RANDY RAY: Paul E. continues to get better. Sometimes I think he is saying things specifically to get them in the Torch Quotebook.

JEFFREY COHEN: Jesse "The Mayor" Ventura appears a goner. Even if he, like Clint Eastwood, decides to cease his political experiment after one term, he has enough sidelines now that a full-time return to commentating appears unlikely. Plus if he did, he will have to live up to his legend. This is the fate which has befallen Roddy Piper, and only a heel turn can revive the Scot.

TIM PRAMAS: Ventura was excellent and is sorely missed. His work in the Hogan-Warrior match was outstanding. Heenan is funny. Piper enjoys himself. They both make wrestling fun.

IAN GOODWIN: Bring back Jesse! Piper sucks.

MARK BROWN: I like Cornette better than anyone, but he was not allowed to show his stuff. I will hold a permanent grudge against WCW for driving him out. Paul E.'s style does not wear on me like it used to, and his pairing with Ross is outstanding.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Jerry Lawler followed by Paul E. Dangerously. Paul E. is okay, but he can only hope to have Lawler's wit.

LOST NAME #1: His Honor the Mayor defined the role of heel commentator in this era. Jesse made Vince tolerable and the WWF broadcasts fun. Things just have not been the same without him. Cornette and Ross were great together, especially when Cornette was a heel. I really miss Corny. Paul E. Dangerously is beginning to fill Cornette's shoes, however.

ERIC KROL: Paul E. Dangerously gets the nod because Jesse was gone for most of the year.

ANDY STOWELL: Funk, Piper, and Dangerously. "He kicked him right in the balls, Crispy!" won the whole thing for Funk. I am so glad Pedicino wants to use him in a productive role. Piper makes me not miss Jesse. Now if only Paul E. would cut the shit and have Ross have it with the phone, we would have a decent show.

Third place goes to Dutch Mantell, who would have gotten over a lot better if he did not look like he does. He and Schiavone just did not mesh visually, although alongside Schiavone, Mantell showed a lot of wit and skill. Vastly underrated.

Second place goes to Bobby Heenan for being funny, getting over angles, getting himself over, and still entertaining the fans.

First place goes to the man who wrote the rule book on the heel color role. Everyone will forever be compared to Ventura. His loss is one of wrestling's biggest this year.

Honorable mention to Paul E. Dangerously and Jim Cornette, both of whom played the color role very well for WCW. Paul E.'s rate of improvement should make him a synch for next year's award.

ANNOUNCING PAIR OF THE YEAR

- 1990:
- 1) ROSS & DANGEROUSLY 33%
- 2) MCMAHON & VENTURA 17%
- 3) MONSOON & HEENAN 10%
- 4) SCHIAVONE & MANTELL 9%
- 5) MCMAHON & PIPER 7%
- 6-10) Russell & Hayes & Garvin, Ross & Cornette, Cruise & Funk, Ross & Caudle, Don Coss & Scotty the Body Levy.

1989: McMahon & Ventura (Ross & Cornette, Ross & Caudle, Ross & Hayes)

READER COMMENTS:

LOST NAME #1: I picked Ross and Dangerously for the

performance they put on at Clash XIII. They literally saved that show with their personal warfare. Ross and Dangerously compliment each other very well. I really enjoy the low-key style Ross and Caudle employ during the telecasts when they work together. Not as entertaining as Ross-Dangerously, but solid. Jesse and Vince were good because of Jesse.

ERIC KROL: Ross and Dangerously were brilliant as a combo on the PPV's.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: How about anybody with Jim Ross. Well, that is except the "King of Redundancy," Bob Caudle. Ross and Cornette fed incredibly off of each other. Nobody could touch them this year. When Dangerously stepped in at Halloween Havoc, he showed he was ready. In only a short time, he and Ross have shown some of the Cornette-Ross chemistry, but Paul E. does not lend the intelligence to a match that Cornette does. He will get there in time. Tony Schiavone and Dutch Mantel on WWV were funny as hell.

ANDY STOWELL: McMahon & Piper, Cruise & Funk, and Dave Brown & Eddie Gilbert.

IAN GOODWIN: Ross and Dangerously on NWA Pro New York combine hilarious comedy and great match description. Dangerously also plays up the angles and matches more than his personality. He easily walks a thin line.

Third goes to Schiavone and Mantell, who could have been the cult heroes Crispy and Funk were if they were known by more newsletter readers. Instead, Schiavone and Mantell put on an almost unrecognized great performance every week on World Wide Wrestling.

Second goes to McMahon and Ventura. McMahon was hurt all year by forcing that gravelly, deep, strained voice. Ventura, while he was around, continued to work with McMahon like no other, especially Roddy Piper. If Piper turned heel, he and McMahon could be great, but Roddy agreeing with Vince does not have the needed chemistry like the Ventura-McMahon verbal altercations.

First place is a tie between Ross & Cornette for their work in the first half of the year and Ross & Dangerously for their work in the later part of the year. Cornette was excellent at getting a match over and Dangerously was excellent at being entertaining when the match was not. And Ross plays well off of both of them.

FEUD OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) NASTY BOYS-STEINERS 16%
- 2) RIC FLAIR-STING 13%
- 3) JERRY LAWLER-EDDIE GILBERT 11%
- 4) HORSEMEN-DOOM 10%
- 5) RIC FLAIR-LEX LUGER 9%
- 6-10) Hogan-Earthquake, Adams-Austin, Rude-Warrior, Southern-Midnights, Steinners-Doom.

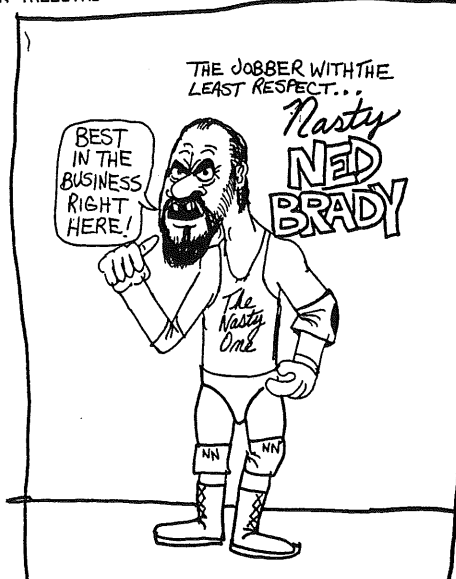
1989: Flair-Funk (Flair-Steamboat, Hogan-Savage, Rockers-Busters)

1988: Savage-DiBiase (Fantastics-Midnights, Roberts-Rude, Midnights-Original Midnights)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: Usually, a feud like Adams-Austin gets stale

BY RON TRELSTAD



NASTY NED BRADY: BEST WORKER OF 1991?

when it lasts as long as it has, but they continue to be the biggest draw in Dallas.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: When you get as physical as The Steiners and The Nasty Boys, that is when you suspend reality for that single moment and realize just how brutal this sport can be. The match at Havoc was painful enough to watch. I do not know how anyone can consider getting in the ring with Scott and Rick.

ERIC KROL: After Starrcade, I have to go with Doom-Horsemen.

LOST NAME #1: I had Flair-Luger first until Starrcade. The Doom-Horsemen feud these past few months has gotten wilder and more intense, capping off with that wild and bloody brawl in St. Louis. I was at Starrcade and the heat and intensity of that match was incredible. Flair-Luger has been a classic wrestler vs. muscleman feud. It has been very intense over the length of it, going back to Luger being kicked out of the Horsemen, and I believe we saw the end at Clash XII. Steiners-Nasty Boys was nearly the equal to Doom-Horsemen. I downgraded it because the feud will have no clear finish and I have not had the opportunity to see the Halloween Havoc match.

The third best feud of the year from every standpoint was Ricky "The Prophet" Rice vs. Jerry Lynn. They had matches all over Minnesota and Illinois and every one of their matches got rave reviews. Their outdoor "Wrestle For Shelter" main event at Loring Park in Minneapolis was breathtaking. Their matches packed George's every time. These two may never have a better series in their careers as both styles worked very well together. If you are a tape collector and have not seen their Wrestle For Shelter match, although the tape does not due the brawling around the park and into the TV truck justice, it is worth the effort.

The second best feud in my opinion was Eddie Gilbert vs. Jerry Lawler. The angles setting up the feud with Gilbert hitting Lawler with the car had never been done before. Their brawls around the Mid-South Coliseum every Monday night through most of the last third of the year was the most intense series of the year. The interviews for the feud were above the interviews for any other feud this year. If anything was going to help the Tennessee territory come back to life, this would have been it.

The best feud of the year was Doom against The Horsemen. Their matches were phenomenal, climaxing with their Starrcade '90 match in St. Louis. The ambiguity over who was the face and who was the heel forced fans to direct their cheers at the better wrestlers that night. For Doom to be main eventing less than a year after being buried on a national pay-per-view event shows how far they came this year.

BEST NEW GIMMICK OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) THE UNDERTAKER 31%
- 2) THE JUICER 12%
- 3) MICHAEL WALLSTREET & ALEXANDRIA YORK 10%
- 4) THE BLACK SCORPION 7%
- 5) BARRY WINDHAM DOUBLES AS STING 3%
- 6-10) Model/Arrogance, Running the Gauntlet, Slaughter as a Heel, Wrestling School Dropout, Saying You Have \$25 Million To Start A New Promotion.

1989: Destruction Crew (Skyscrapers, Norman the Lunatic, Woman & Doom)

1988: Steiners and The Varsity Club (Twin Referee Causes Hogan To Lose Belt, Paul E. and The Original Midnight Express attack Cornette & The Midnight Express, Road Warriors turn heel on Sting)

READER COMMENTS:

ERIC KROL: Callous is perfect as The Undertaker because he looks the part and cannot sell anyway. Juicer and J.W. Storm were fresh breaths, but not used properly.

ANDY STOWELL: Kane the Undertaker and The Juicer. And you thought he was coming out of the egg! Shows Vince still has it. What a monster, and he fits right in with the character that Brother Love portrays. Only problem is that the gimmick is so good, everybody loves the guy. Definitely the heel to watch.

IAN GOODWIN: Undertaker gimmick is tailor made for Mark. Slaughter's Iraqi gimmick is very tasteless and disgusting, but it has generated a lot of heat and made him one of the top heels.

TIM PRAMAS: Gobbledy Gooker, another gimmick where people laugh at McMahon on his way to the bank?

LOST NAME #1: I must take my hat off to whomever came up with Kane the Undertaker. It is probably the best gimmick anyone in this country has come up with in years. Mark Calloway plays the role perfectly and seems tailor-made for

it. The Undertaker could be the monster heel of the nineties. I really liked The Juicer. I know my four-year old daughter really got into him. He was the kid's character that WCW has needed all this time. It is just too bad that Art Barr's mistake will always follow him around. El Gigante was not a bad idea, just badly executed. If he had been trained better and if he had been debuted in a bigger way - as a mystery partner at the Bash possibly - he might have gotten over better.

RANDY RAY: Bad year for gimmicks. I think Curtis Thompson and Ricky Santana could have taken their U.S. Male gimmick to WCW and done very well in mid-card feuds with the likes of The Rock & Roll Express and The Southern Boys. Paul Roma woke up one morning and developed a personality. At least that is what it looked like.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: I do not know how he could do it. I can only think that he is proud of his girth. But that Buddy Rose Blow-Away Diet was the funniest skit of the year. Just think of the wonders it could produce on Dusty Rhodes. I was extremely happy to see Mike Rotunda's transformation to Michael Wallstreet. He has been buried for too long since the demise of the Varsity Club and you have to love his "Administrative Assistant." She is so smarmy. I wonder if he will try to make her one of his hostile takeovers.

Alexandria York gets third place because the computer angle adds a whole new dimension to Wallstreet's matches. I do not think it was executed well because York did not interrupt Mike in the middle of one of his moves because the computer beeped and warned against it.

The Juicer was great. I chuckle every time he pulls off that bandana and shakes the powder off of his hair. The silly string is cute. And Art Barr's ability to execute unique and unexpected highspots made the gimmick perfect. Then real life got involved, but that does not take away from the gimmick.

Kane the Undertaker. He scares me. The total opposite heel from Stan Hansen, but just as effective. Who would have thought the WWF could do more to improve Mark Callous than WCW would be able to do for The Red Rooster? Kane is going to be one act to watch closely in 1991.

BEST ANGLE OF THE YEAR

1990:

- 1) GILBERT HITS LAWLER WITH CAR 18%
- 2) WINDHAM DOUBLES AS STING, GETS PINNED 16%
- 3) STING THROWN OUT OF HORSEMEN 12%
- 4) EARTHQUAKE ATTACKS HOGAN, HH RETIRES 12%
- 5) THE BLACK SCORPION TORMENTS STING 7%
- 6-10) Jake Roberts Blinded By Martel, Nasty Boys attack Steiners, DiBiase Attacks Dustin Rhodes at Ringside, Heenan Insults Bossman's Mother, Flair attacked by Teddy Long's Henchmen after Limo Ride.

1989: Funk Attacks Flair at WrestleWar (Cornette Attacks Dudes, Robin Green/Woman Turns on Steiners)

RANDY RAY: Had Eddie Gilbert hit Jerry Lawler with the car, the angle between them might have been best, but the Adams wife vs. ex-wife angle gets my vote.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: I can remember the shock in seeing The Horsemen turn on Sting at the Texas Shootout. Both Ole and Flair were so damn believable. Flair's berating of Sting and his slaps were perfect. You could feel the heat leap off the screen. Now there was the Ric Flair I always loved. Lots of people may have knocked what they thought was a screwjob ending at Havoc, but that duplicate Sting angle was a piece of genius for me. I had no idea, and still did not when the telecast was done. I really got

UNDERTAKER: BEST NEW GIMMICK OF THE YEAR FOR 1991... BY RYAN JONES



into the Flair getting chauffeured by Long angle, simply on Flair's performance and Doom walking toward the limo. But that line about picking up Janet Jackson at 3:00 was a treasure. Only the Nature Boy could get away with that one.

ERIC KROL: The Sting-Windham angle was great except it was never acknowledged on TV. Because nothing else happened, the sheets were far more interesting than the ring. Sheetwars and Hitchcock-Kunkel were very entertaining.

IAN GOODWIN: Flair's limo ride was extremely well done. Freebirds with their fake impersonators, really themselves, was hilarious.

JEFFREY COHEN: I admit it. The dual Sting angle at Halloween Havoc had me the most excited since Jim Cornette whacked Shane last year. Sure, it was a cheap ending, but who expected it? And that is what makes an angle work. Flair as The Black Scorpion? Everybody knew weeks in advance. But for Havoc, secrecy or last-minute planning made for one heck of a surprise.

LOST NAME #1: I did not see any angles that made me sit up and take notice this year. The fake Sting angle sounded great, another piece of Horsemen trickery, but nothing was done with it afterwards. It was totally ignored on TV. The Steiners being ambushed during the Halloween Havoc contract signings was excellent. That incident really heated up that feud. I did not see that Lawler car rundown. I picked it just from what I read in the sheets. That took a lot of guts, or insanity, to even contemplate doing that.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Turn of Billy Jack Haynes followed by Snowman vs. Lawler, and Gilbert hits Lawler with car. While the turn of Billy Jack was short-lived, it was one of the best turns I have ever seen. Haynes has fantastic heel presence. The Gilbert parking lot angle was really hurt by Dave Brown's laid back performance. Brown could learn by watching Eddie "The Genius" Marlin. Marlin's performance in the Snowman angle was textbook perfect.

Third place goes to Hogan getting attacked by Earthquake on Brother Love. The angle was so special because of Vince McMahon's intense personal reaction to it and his commentary on the show thereafter. Otherwise, it was the usual attack on Hogan that has been done many times before. The angle was successful as combined with Hogan's threats to retire, is still main eventing into 1991.

Second place goes to the Nasty Boys attack on the Steiners in Chicago to hype their Halloween Havoc match. The sheer brutality of the blows to the Steiner's made this more believable than any angle this year. It also made instant celebrities out of The Nasty Boys, previously stuck in regional groups and doing jobs in the AWA.

Sting, one of the four Horsemen, being kicked out on national TV in an unexpected, well executed angle gets my picks as the best of the year. The injury to Sting delayed and diminished its effectiveness, but it was the start of the feud that carried the NWA in the middle of 1990, Sting vs. Flair. It could have only been made better with the presence of Tully Blanchard, who was one political string away from being part of it.

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) RON SIMMONS | 17% |
| 2) SCOTT STEINER | 17% |
| 3) BUTCH REED | 13% |
| 4) TERRY TAYLOR | 5% |
| 5) BRIAN PILLMAN | 5% |
| 6-10) Mark Undertaker Callous, Curt Hennig, Lex Luger, Sid Vicious, Black Scorpion (went from Al Perez to Bill Irwin to Ric Flair - quite improved!) | |

1989: Luger (Scott Steiner, Rick Rude, Ultimate Warrior)

1988: Sting (Rick Steiner, Luger, Blue Blazer Owen Hart)

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY RAY: Once they let him go, Paul Roma was great. Tommy Rich and Terry Taylor both improved tremendously within the year. When the year started, Tommy Rich could not have had the great matches he has been in against The Freebirds. Terry Taylor is almost back to his old self.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: Ron Simmons is the standout. Sure, he got a much deserved push. But he was exceptional as a heel. His work is so above its former rate. He can better work a match, he has learned to sell much better, and he is probably one of the five best power move wrestlers in the business. Give him credit, Simmons has an unlimited future in this sport. Second goes to Wayne Bloom and third to Mark Callous.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Butch Reed, Tommy Rich, and Tracy Smothers. It is nice to see Butch Reed return from the land of sleep-walking stiff. Give Tommy Rich credit, he is a credible mid-card performer.

JOSEPH MARGOSIAN: Ron Simmons followed by Harley Race. This was the best Race has wrestled in a few years. Call it the "comeback of the year."

MARK BROWN: Doom with Teddy Long are the clear choice. Butch Reed and Ron Simmons, as much for outside the ring as in, have become truly worthy champions.

LOST NAME #1: Scott Steiner took some big steps this year towards being the star WCW needs. Scott seemed to gain much needed confidence in the ring and in front of the cameras. He worked well with a variety of opponents, plus has shown his capabilities as a singles wrestler. Once Scott develops his own unique persona and interview skills, he may just reach his full potential. Brian Pillman has been buried for much of the latter half of the year. The same is true for Ton Zenk. Even with this, Brian continued to provide quality matches and show his potential to be a big star. To survive being ignored says a lot about a wrestler. The same goes for Tom Zenk, maybe even more so.

IAN GOODWIN: As a Skyscraper, Callous was just a mean big guy. When he returned, he has been just devastating since. Ability, agility, moves, power, psychology, everything. The rope walk is great to watch.

ERIC KROL: Paul Roma looks great in the Power & Glory team.

Third place goes to Sgt. Slaughter, who finished the year far from a great wrestler, but early in the year in his matches with Larry Zbyszko over the AWA World Title, he did nothing. By the end of the year, he was taking good bumps and working harder.

Second place for most improved goes to Paul Roma, who was always noted as one of the better early-card performers in the WWF. But his overall improvement, not so much in wrestling skill, but more in his behind the mic abilities and interaction with the crowd.

First place goes to Ron Simmons, who took many strides toward being a franchise wrestler. His interviews, charisma, and in-ring skill improved tremendously.

Honorable mention goes to Butch Reed, whose renewed enthusiasm was great, along with Scott Steiner, whose new moves and more polished ring style moved him closer to being a franchise wrestler.

MOST 'DEPROVED' WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

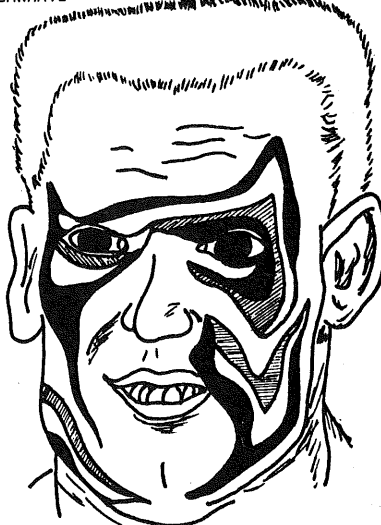
1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) STING | 13% |
| 2) DUSTY RHODES | 9% |
| 3) KERRY VON ERICH | 6% |
| 4) RIC FLAIR | 5% |
| 5) SID VICIOUS | 5% |
| 6-10) Michael Hayes, Hacksaw Duggan, Junkyard Dog, Sgt. Slaughter, Randy Savage. | |

1989: Red Rooster Terry Taylor (Dino Bravo, Hacksaw Duggan, Widowmaker Barry Windham)

1988: Dusty Rhodes (Greg Valentine, Ken Patera, Nikita Koloff)

BY SHAWN SCHWARTZ



STING: MOST DEPROVED OF THE YEAR

JEFFREY COHEN: The Road Warriors have become The Legion of Doom. It is apt that they would choose to use their secondary nickname in their third league because they are using only half to a third of their tremendous talents in the WWF. Hopefully Titan will send them to Japan in a few months for a workout before reuniting The Warlord and The Barbarian as The Powers of Pain to face them.

MARK BROWN: Sting not only pales in comparison with his predecessor, and who would not, but he unfortunately also pales in comparison with himself two years ago. The physical setbacks are not his fault, but he still qualifies here. Even with his mega-push, he is no higher than the number three face in WCW.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: If you were never proven, yet had to be improved before you were unimproved, then how could you win this award? You could if you were Junkyard Dog.

IAN GOODWIN: Warrior and Von Erich were perhaps the two worst champions ever.

LOST NAME #1: I used to think Sting was on the way to becoming a great wrestler, until this year. Obviously, his knee injury made him tentative, but he has shown that he was not able to carry the standard of the promotion in being World Champion. Of course, the idiotic feud with The Black Scorpions really did not help. It really damaged his credibility as a champion. I have begun to think that what made Sting seem so great in 1989 was Ric Flair, Great Muta, and Terry Funk. Curt Hennig was one of my favorites while he was in the AWA. His stint in the WWF as Mr. Perfect has seen him decline considerably. I can almost call his matches in my sleep, they have become so predictable. I guess that is what Vince wants. Sid Vicious wrestled the same way as when I first saw him in 1987. In fact, it seems that he thinks that all he has to do is walk out and play to the crowd. He was much better with Spivey in The Skyscrapers.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Sting, Michael Hayes, and third, Jimmy Garvin. Sting, thy name is Stink. Sting should be in the WWF, jerking the curtain with the Battle Kat. Maybe Vince could make Sting the Gobbledly Gooker. Michael Hayes, one of my all-time favorites, has killed one of the all-time great gimmicks of the last ten years. Garvin is looking more and more like David Crockett with a perm each week. Sad.

Only two men stand out in my mind, so second place goes to Michael Hayes, who lost more credibility this year than anyone else. He used to be the bad-ass from Badstreet, and now he is called homophobic names and bases most of his matches around applying the DDT, which Arn Anderson usually does better. Hayes is one of my all-time favorites. I remember at the SuperClash Showcase in Bloomington, MN he wrestled Iceman Parsons and stole the show. The small crowd was all but dead, then he came out and turned the show around. Splitting with Garvin would be a good start. Remember when Hayes was considered a credible challenger for Lex Luger and his U.S. Title, and actually defeated Luger for the title two years ago. Now he and Garvin are little more than a mid-level team.

First place goes to Sting, who had the worst year of his career since he went singles. His injury early in the year could have ended his career. Instead, it made him conservative. He used to be known for performing that one move which would put the entire arena on their feet. Now, he is most known for not selling for half the match, thus damaging the credibility of his opponent and making for a boring match. He could still be the biggest star in the sport, but to do so, he needs a new image, such as dropping the make-up, mature in overall attitude, and at least on big shows, perform a hot move, ala his Starrcade '89 top rope dive on Animal outside the ring.

BEST WEEKLY TV SHOW OF THE YEAR

- 1990:
- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) WCW SATURDAY | 32% |
| 2) WWF SUPERSTARS | 19% |
| 3) USWA CHALLENGE | 12% |
| 4) USWA WMC LIVE SHOW | 8% |
| 5) WCW MAIN EVENT | 7% |
| 6-10) WCW Power Hour, WCW World Wide, WCW Pro New York, WWF Prime Time, WWF Wrestling Challenge. | |

1989: NWA World Championship, NWA Power Hour, WWF Superstars.

1988: WWF Superstars, NWA World Championship, WWF Saturday Nights Main Event (* - no longer qualifies with "weekly series" stipulations), CWA Championship.

RANDY NORDQUIST: USWA/WMC, followed by USWA Challenge and WCW Saturday. No contest. The Memphis show week after week remained consistently interesting. USWA Challenge

came back from the dead this year and promises to be even better next year.

LOST NAME #1: WWF Superstars of Wrestling is very slickly produced, fast-paced, and easy to watch. It serves its purpose brilliantly. It was better when it the announcing team was Vince and Jesse, however. WCW Power Hour was great when Jim Cornette was co-host, but has suffered because of constant preemption by TBS. I do not expect PH to last another year. WWF Prime Time Wrestling is much like Superstars, but the studio setting takes away from it. Bobby Heenan is the reason that PTW has been successful, at least until lately. Gorilla Monsoon is the announcer I would most like to reach into the TV and choke. I enjoyed PTW because of the variety of matches you would see.

Third place goes to NWA Pro New York. It gets the nod over the national NWA Pro and A-show World Wide because of the Ross-Dangerously combination and the local segments done at Grand Central Station and other landmarks.

Second place goes to WCW Saturday which has had an up and down year, but when it is on, it is the best wrestling show going.

First place tie goes to the state of the art Superstars of Wrestling and Wrestling Challenge. The graphics and overall flow of the show outdid anything WCW and USWA did. The constant changing and upgrading of the introductions along with the innovative over-the-shoulder shot of the announcers in the area when they are actually in a producing studio is fantastic stuff. Over the years, both programs have found a successful blend of canned interviews, studio announcing, live stage interviews, and wrestling.

BEST MAJOR EVENT OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1) WCW GREAT AMERICAN BASH | 22% |
| 2) WRESTLEMANIA VI | 14% |
| 3) WCW STARRCADE '89 | 12% |
| 4) WCW HALLOWEEN HAVOC | 12% |
| 5) WCW WRESTLEWAR | 8% |

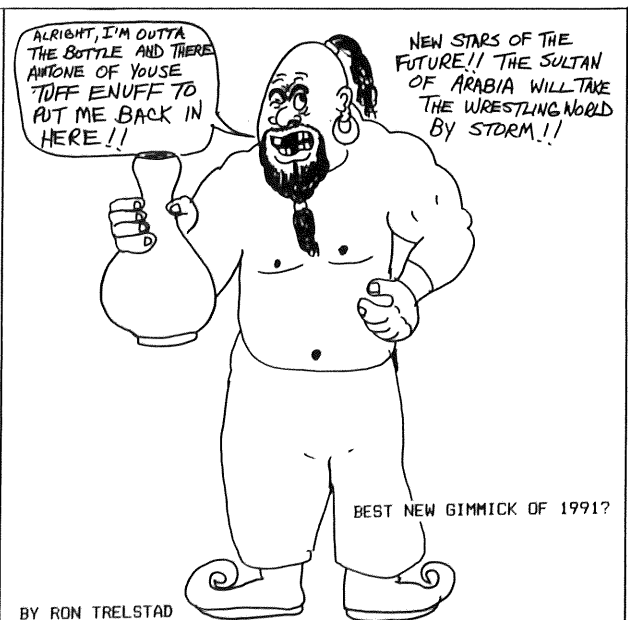
6-10) WCW Starrcade '90, WWF Summerslam, WWF Survivor Series, USWA Televised Title Tournament, Clash of the Champions X.

1989: NWA Great American Bash, NWA WrestleWar, NWA Chi-Town Rumble.

LOST NAME #1: I am biased toward Starrcade '90 because I attended, but it was overall the best in match quality this year. It had four good to great matches, and what major event had more than three? Plus, none of the matches were absolutely horrible and unwatchable. WrestleWar '90 had two of the best matches anywhere this year and was overall very entertaining. What made Wrestlemania VI so great was the Hogan-Warrior showdown and its aftermath. I got into it even though I do not like the WWF.

IAN GOODWIN: NWA Meadowlands show in August 24 was ten times better than any WWF PPV. Live wrestling like that in this area is very rare.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Starrcade, Great American Bash, and



USWA Title Tournament, although nothing came close to last year's winners.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: I am a bit prejudiced since I flew across the country to see it, but even overlooking that, the Baltimore Bash was still the best. Excellent bouts, a match of the year candidate in the Southern Boys-Midnight Express confrontation and a moment of the year with the title change and the ceremony that followed afterward. I have been in a lot of Hogan filled buildings, but the pop that Sting got after getting the three count was the loudest I have ever heard at a wrestling match, bar none. The Egg Dome Summit showed that the WWF's best can put on a show with other top calibre wrestlers. Both the Hogan-Hansen and Tenryu-Savage matches were excellent. I loved Halloween Havoc for that Steiners-Nasty Boys match alone. Coupled with Windham as Sting, I would give it third.

RANDY RAY: The Royal Rumble got over the Hogan-Warrior angle and was a pretty good match. They picked the right guys to send in at the right time and there were some interesting in-match angles.

Third goes to WrestleWar for the great Flair-Luger match except for the run-in ending and the great renewal of the Midnight Express-Rock & Roll Express classic encounter.

Second goes to Halloween Havoc which missed having a great main event, although the Steiners-Nastys bout was great, the overall theme was entertaining, Hansen pinning Luger clean was a great surprise, and the Flair & Arn vs. Doom bout was nearly four stars. A very good event.

The Baltimore Bash continues to be the true card of the year for WCW. This year was no different with what was thought to be a historic title change and a feeling in the air that reflected that. The Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys match was phenomenal and overall it was the best show of the year.

BABYFACE OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|---------------------|-----|
| 1) HULK HOGAN | 30% |
| 2) STING | 28% |
| 3) LEX LUGER | 12% |
| 4) SCOTT STEINER | 9% |
| 5) ULTIMATE WARRIOR | 5% |

6-10) Rick Steiner, Brian Pillman, Jerry Lawler, The Juicer, Jake Roberts.

1989: Hulk Hogan, Ric Flair, Sting.

1988: Sting, Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage.

MARK BROWN: Who else can you choose but Hogan? However, the gap between 1 and 2 is getting narrower by the day. If handled correctly, within two years, Scott Steiner can have a vice-lock on this one.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Lex Luger, Jeff Jarrett, and Scott Steiner. In these days of "hip-talking" roid ragers, Jarrett's classic sincere delivery is refreshing. Scott Steiner should start watching Jarrett instead of Hawk. Luger, who is a classic heel, was surprisingly good as a face this year.

IAN GOODWIN: Hogan, plain and simple. Give Sting more of a chance. It is not his fault, it is Ole's. Sting can do the job.

ANDY STOWELL: I ain't votin' for no pansy waist babyface scum!

LOST NAME #1: Hogan has been the number one face for almost seven years now. His performance at Wrestlemania only added to his status as the biggest star of this era. Sting, even with the two big setbacks he suffered this year, is still the top face of WCW. The crowd reaction to his entrance at Starrcade convinced me. Lex Luger is Sting's nearest rival for the hearts of WCW fans and, with what has been done with Sting, he could take his place. I think the casual fans always wonder if or when Luger could turn heel again.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: How can you discount the power of the Immortal Hulk Hogan? Hogan could play "Chopsticks" on the gazoo and get a standing "O." His charisma is unmatched. Sting still continues to charge audiences. The title change in Baltimore was evidence enough for me as to how much crowd noise he can generate?

First, second, and third goes to Hulk Hogan who has mastered virtually every aspect of being a babyface in today's pro wrestling world.

Honorable mention to Sting, who was a near second to Hogan at times and much further from Hogan more often.

HEEL OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| 1) RIC FLAIR | 17% |
| 2) STAN HANSEN | 13% |
| 3) MR. PERFECT CURT HENNIG | 12% |
| 4) TERRY FUNK | 11% |
| 5) EDDIE GILBERT | 9% |

6-10) Sid Vicious, Arn Anderson, Ted DiBiase, Rick Rude, Earthquake.

1989: Terry Funk, Lex Luger, Randy Savage.

1988: Ted DiBiase, Barry Windham, Eddie Gilbert.

RANDY RAY: Stan Hansen was great. He was over as a monster and he gave convincing tough guy interviews.

ERIC KROL: Sid Vicious is so imposing as a heel, he could get squashed by Hogan and still have his heat.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Gilbert, Flair, and Funk. Gilbert is smooth and has quite a large bag of tricks; it is ever-changing and always effective. Flair is always the same, but he is a classic. We did not see enough of Funk, but he was great in what we saw.

LOST NAME #1: Ric Flair is popular because he is a heel. His turn on Sting last February was a classic. There has never been a heel like Flair. Randy Savage could approach the class that Flair occupies, if he has not already. Savage, like Flair, has the fans' respect despite his heel role. Ted DiBiase's Million Dollar Man persona is so obnoxious that even I cannot stand him, but that is why he is such a great heel.

MARK BROWN: Vicious may actually belong in the face category, but no other heel can come close in terms of reaction.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: I did not have to see that much of him this year to know that even a part-time Terry Funk is better than a full-time anyone. He defines the term heel. Second would go to an always enjoyable Ted DiBiase, who is still the best interview in the WWF. Stan Hansen gets third for his chewing tobacco.

IAN GOODWIN: Hansen was so believable, he was scary. He reminded me of a crazy guy in a bar. Vicious was great as the psycho-monster heel. DiBiase is still Titan's best all-around heel. His laugh is legendary.

Third place goes to Ted DiBiase who not only is an excellent worker, but he comes off an arrogant and has a great gimmick to back it up.

Terry Funk gets second place and Stan Hansen gets first for the same reasons. Both are the traditional believable bad guy. Both can wrestle and brawl on the highest level. Both have perfected their craft. Hansen gets the nod over Funk due to a more active schedule. Sting could have used Funk or Hansen as his main opponent for the last four months of the year. Sting may have won wrestler and babyface and most improved, but instead he was stuck with The Black Scorpion and let it hurt him more than it should have.

GOBBLEDY GOOKER: UNOFFICIAL WORST NEW GIMMICK OF 1990



GOBBLEDY-GOOKER
WORST Gimmick!

BY JOHN HITCHCOCK

WORST WORKER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) JUNKYARD DOG | 16½ |
| 2) ULTIMATE WARRIOR | 12½ |
| 3) THE NIGHT STALKER | 9½ |
| 4) EARTHQUAKE | 7½ |
| 5) SID VICIOUS | 6½ |
| 6-10) Tugboat, Hacksaw Duggan, Motor City Madman, Sgt. Slaughter, Andre the Giant. | |

1989: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Zeus.

1988: Andre the Giant, Ultimate Warrior, Junkyard Dog.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: The worst, figuring in push and what we are supposed to believe, is still The Ultimate Cheeseburger. If huffing and puffing, rope-shaking, and attempting to run to the ring like a maniac are the wares that make a champion, then wake me up from the sleeper. Do not forget Vince, the marquee says "wrestling." Then comes The Earthquake. His personality is as flat as my ex-girlfriend's chest. Finally there is Sid Vicious. If a guy need only stand in the ring and look good, he would have been World Champion the first time he laced his boots. But the build is where the talent ends. As opposed to the other two, I hope he gets better.

RANDY NORDQUIST: After much consideration, I have to say, 1) Sid Vicious, 2) Sid Vicious, and 3) Sid Vicious. If you do not believe Eddie Gilbert is a genius, think back on how he used Sid in Continental. He put Sid in a non-speaking role under a hockey mask with Shane Douglas as his "brother" to do all the work and draw all the heat. "Sid Vicious rules the world!" is not my idea of entertainment. Dino Bravo and either Master Blaster are runners up.

RANDY RAY: Scott Norton is worse than bad. Portland fans actually cheered The Grappler over this guy.

IAN GOODWIN: Ultimate Warrior. How could this guy be a World Champion? He is not an athlete. I never liked Hulk, but this idiot made me long for the days of the legdrop. All Von Erich does is punch.

ERIC KROL: Motor City Madman should have been left in the pool hall from whence he came.

LOST NAME #1: Man, blindfold me and let me pick a name from a hat. So many are so bad, but The Night Stalker is the worst. My four year old daughter executes maneuvers as well as he does. Sid is not much better now, but has shown flashes of ability in the past. Still... Earthquake, well what I have said about the other two does not need to be repeated.

Scott Norton gets third worst. He does not do anything wrong and has room to improve a lot, but he did not do anything in the ring this year, either. Japan tours could turn him into a star, though.

The Nightstalker. Simply put, he did not belong in WCW and gets second.

Motor City Madman. Madman messed up more moves in shorter a time period than anyone I have ever seen. A poor example of a wrestling in the ring and in physique, so he gets first.

INDEPENDENT WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) RICKY RICE | 20½ |
| 2) TERRY FUNK | 10½ |
| 3) CACTUS JACK | 9½ |
| 4) EDDIE GILBERT | 6½ |
| 5) LARRY CAMERON | 5½ |
| 6-10) Jerry Lawler, Jerry Lynn, Steve Williams, D.C. Drake, Cheetah Kid. | |

1989: Ricky Rice, Jerry Lawler, Scotty the Body.

JEFFREY COHEN: Cactus Jack decided to spend the remainder of 1990 doing sporadic UWF tapings and waiting for a major group to come after him. In his independent work on two Philadelphia cards, he revved up the crowd and showed why his talent screams for pay-per-view and a larger audience.

ANDY STOWELL: Marc Curtis (Brian Hildebrand). I saw him on an independent card in a suburb of Pittsburgh and this guy is phenomenal. Full rope walk into an aerial drop. Fantastic heel persona got him the only heat of the night. Realistic bumps, sells well, makes good comebacks, too. Should definitely be working for a big office.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Ricky Rice, Jerry Lynn, and Lightning Kid. The Prophet wins this award by a large margin. Rice would light Memphis on fire with his Prophet gimmick and hot ring work. After a short stint in the USWA, he could

TOP TORCH WEEKLY FEATURES

- 1) TORCH TALK by Wade Keller (3)
- 2) TORCH NEWSBREAKERS by Wade Keller (9)
- 3) BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE by Wade Keller (New)
- 4) NEWS & ANALYSIS by Wade Keller (5)
- 5) BILL KUNKEL'S "WRESTLING POTSHOTS" (1)
- 6) RINGSIDE BEAT by The Readers (14)
- 7) RAY VHEBBE'S "RING RUMBLINGS" (8)
- 8) MICK KARCH'S "SUBMISSION" (4)
- 9) JEFF BOWDREN'S "HIGHSPOTS" (New)
- 10) HITCH & MITCH'S "FRONT ROW SECTION D" (New)
- 11) READER RHETORIC by The Readers (11)
- 12) QUOTEBOOK by The Wrestlers (13)
- 13) MR. MIKE'S MONDO TORCHING (7)
- 14) STEVE GERBER'S "WHAT'S OUT THERE" (15+)
- 15) RANDOM MARC PRESENTS (6)

TORCH ARTICLE OF THE YEAR

- 1) TORCH TALK: JIM ROSS by Wade Keller
- 2) TORCH TALK: CACTUS JACK by Wade Keller
- 3) TORCH TALK: JIM CORNETTE by Wade Keller
- 4) BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE: ORNDORFF AS SCORPION by WK
- 5) TORCH TALK: EDDIE GILBERT by Wade Keller
- 6) TORCH SUPPLEMENT: PEDICINO BUYS USWA by Wade Keller
- 7) FRONT ROW SECTION D: RACISM by Hitch & Mitch
- 8) POTSHOTS: APARTMENT HOUSE WRESTLING by Bill Kunkel
- 9) BELOW THE BOTTOM LINE: BRET HART by Wade Keller
- 10) TORCH TALK: NICK BOCKWINKEL by Wade Keller

be a top star in WCW. Lynn is also terrific and Lightning Kid is off to a great start with his blend of athletic skill and absolute lack of fear. This guy will try anything and usually pull it off.

Third place goes to Eddie Gilbert. For a man who quit a promotion because he could not wrestle, he quit and had one of the best series of matches of the year with Jerry Lawler. His interviews and overall performance was great the last half of the year.

Ricky Rice did not wrestle close to as much as Gilbert, but his matches were just as brutal at times and paired with incredible charisma and great athletic feats, he had a great year. His interview on SNR were at times phenomenal, and at other times lack direction and were a bit too strange. But Rice is a solid second.

First place goes to the man I would most like to watch if I was going to an independent show, and standing just above Ricky Rice and my fourth place pick, Cactus Jack, is Terry Funk. He won the USWA Title and headlined every card on which he wrestled. His antics and believability this year were second to none.

JAPAN WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1) JUSHIN RIGER | 32½ |
| 2) KEIJI MUTO | 22½ |
| 3) JUMBO TSURUTA | 21½ |
| 4) MITSUWARA MISAWA | 15½ |
| 5) STAN HANSEN | 5½ |
| 6-10) Akira Maeda, Terry Gordy, Genichiro Tenryu, Tatsumi Fujinami, Atsushi Onita. | |

1989: Akira Maeda, Genichiro Tenryu, Jushin Riger.

ERIC KROL: Jushin Riger has been innovative, a great face, and kept up a superhuman workrate.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: He flies through the air with the greatest of ease. He is Jushin, the man who defies the trapeze. He defies all. Riger can fly, mat wrestle... he can do it all.

KEIJI MUTOH:

BY SHAWN SCHWARTZ



#2 JAPANESE WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

ANDY STOWELL: Even being out for most of the summer, Riger still stood out. His match on 1/31 against Sano was the best match I have ever seen. Nothing even close to that has even been done in this country. His feud with Benoit, as The Pegasus Kid, was also fantastic. It was really nice of him to put Benoit over so cleanly when he really did not have to. Give credit to The Pegasus Kid, as he really kept up with Riger when Hart proved disappointing. Misawa was thrust into the spotlight as a result of Tenryu leaving and he did not miss a beat. Went into a great series with Tsuruta and proved to be a worthy partner for Toshiaki Kawada, who seems to have lost heart with Ricky Fuyuki's defection to SWS. Mutoh has gone home a great hero and I am really happy for him. He deserves his accolades, but could have been even better had Choshu laid down for him. Also, it was a good year for Saito, especially for all the press he got for becoming the AWA Champion. Although it did not mean a damn thing to anybody, I am glad he got the recognition for being such a great wrestler in this country for so many years.

LOST NAME #1: Jumbo Tsuruta because of the excellent match he had with Misawa and the fact that he put Misawa over for the win. Jushin Riger because of his series with Pegasus Kid and the incredible moves he performs in and out of the ring. Mitsuhiro Misawa because of the match with Tsuruta.

JAPAN TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1) STEVE WILLIAMS & TERRY GORDY | 46% |
| 2) MASA CHONO & KEIJI MUTO | 34% |
| 3) MITSUHIRO MISAWA & TOSHIKI KAWADA | 5% |
| 4) DOUG FURNAS & DOUG KROFFAT | 4% |
| 5) STAN HANSEN & DANNY SPIVEY | 4% |

1989: Footloose, Furnas & Kroffat, Gordy & Hansen.

LOST NAME #1: Gordy and Williams, because of their reign as All-Asian Tag Champs and the wild matches they had against Hansen and his partners. Muto and Chono, because of their excellent work and their reign as IWGP Champs.

JAPAN FEUD OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| 1) MISAWA-TSURUTA | 33% |
| 2) RIGER-SANO | 27% |
| 3) RIGER-PEGASUS KID | 23% |
| 4) HANSEN & SPIVEY-GORDY & WILLIAMS | 7% |
| 5) ATSUSHI ONITA-TATSUTOSHI GOTO | 3% |

LOST NAME #1: Excellent matches that Muto and Shinya Hashimoto had this year, singles and tag, decided it for me. Especially the match they had for the Kyushu Cup. Riger and Pegasus Kid I saw in only two matches, one was the Tokyo Dome tag match in February, but they put on one hell of an exhibition.

ERIC KROL: The Misawa-Tsuruta series kept All-Japan on top after SWS raided some people.

GABRIEL DAIGLE: There is no way in hell that you could not sell a Jushin Riger-Pegasus Kid match to American fans. The minute they would see the quality of work and total wreckless abandon for their safety in some of those highspots, the would stick like glue to the tube and run like mad to their arenas. Those two together was insane

JAPAN PROMOTION OF THE YEAR

1990:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| 1) ALL-JAPAN | 46% |
| 2) NEW-JAPAN | 33% |
| 3) UNIVERSAL WRESTLING FEDERATION | 11% |
| 4) FRONTIER MARTIAL ARTS WRESTLING | 5% |
| 5) ALL-JAPAN WOMEN | 3% |

LOST NAME #1: I picked All-Japan because of the tough, wild matches they had and because of Tsuruta-Misawa. New-Japan has the slicker TV show and more wrestling matches but I just got into the All-Japan more. SWS is my third pick.

When you finish these 55 pages and want more of the same - 70 pages more - I encourage you to consider purchasing the Torch Summer ANNUAL III 1990. It features a special "Torch Talk Collection" featuring the top announcers in wrestling: Jim Ross, Ken Resnick, Lance Russell, Gordon Solie, Mick Karch, Craig Johnson, Dave Brown, Lee Marshall, and Chris Cruise. The ANNUAL also features an interview with Eddie Gilbert, a 5 by 7 high quality photo of Sting in full-outfit before winning the World Title in July, the original "Oldie Anderson" cartoon script, Mr. Mike, Mick Karch, and Bill Kunkel with great 60's-70's-80's nostalgia, and tons more. Send \$10.00 per copy to PWT; Box 201844; Minneapolis MN 55420.

MICK KARCH'S SNR VIEWER MAIL

BY MICK KARCH

We are back again with a dip into the mailbag, or is that a mailbag full of dips, examining a brief sampling of legit "Saturday Night At Ringside" viewer mail. No ribs, no works, all shoots. Let us read along...

"I'm biggest fan there is. I watch Saturday Night SNR to see wrestling. You talk too much so much and that authority guy gets me sick. You guys look alike and are crazy when you don't like Hulk Hogan. Why don't you try him on for size."

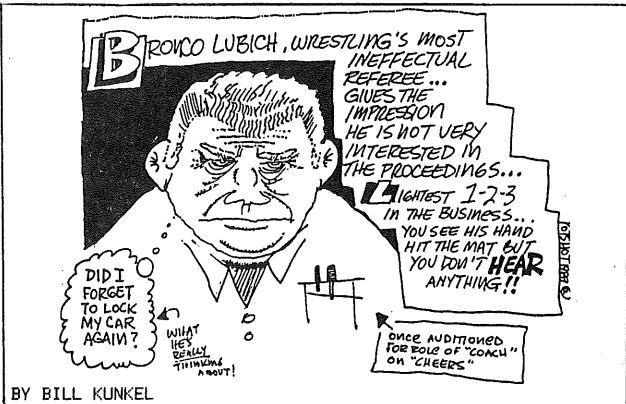
"Oh, Vince really outdid himself this time. The Gobbledy Gooker. How inventive. How novel. As Hawk says, what a rush. Weeks of hype, we expect Mark Callous, maybe John Nord and we get a dancing turkey. You know what, the real turkey is McMahon and the stuffing is the money I shelled out to watch that fiasco."

"Watching you with those female boxers from Solid Gold, I have to ask, was that really the microphone you were holding?"

"Were Paul E. Dangerously and Sweet Daddy Falcone separated at birth?"

"Is the Golden Idol related to NWA star Joe Casana?"

"If Bronco Lubich slows down any more, they're going to pour dirt on the guy and plant flowers."



"You are so smug. Get a life. Why do you always pick on the Golden Idol. He is the greatest manager in the world and he doesn't need a nerd like you to put him down. Just because he's slightly overweight doesn't give you the right to make fun of him."

"I never laughed so hard as when The Sheik broke his sword hitting the watermelon on your show. The way it fell apart, the sword that is, it looked like one of Verne's budgeted \$1.50 props."

"Get the NWA and Ted Turner ban big Sid Vishus from wrestling. Wait 'till Stinger gets him in the corner and smashes him down. Then he's going to be little Sid Midjet, not Vishus."

"What do you think of every two years all the promoters get together their best guys and have a sixty-four man tournament for the World Title. Then we'd find out who the best guy really is."

"What a sad day when Animal and Hawk decided to get out of wrestling and join Titan Sports. Now only if they would get really pissed and potato the snot out of Vince McMahon."

"For the least popular, my vote goes to Sting. That whining crybaby wants to make me puke. I call him the valley girl of professional wrestling. You know, gag me with a spoon and all that garbage."

"I'll tell you why the NWA doesn't come back to Minneapolis, because this town is dead as far as wrestling is concerned. Verne Gagne killed it and as he shoveled out such a horseshit product for the last two years. Be realistic, drop you're "bring back the NWA" campaign, nobody really cares."

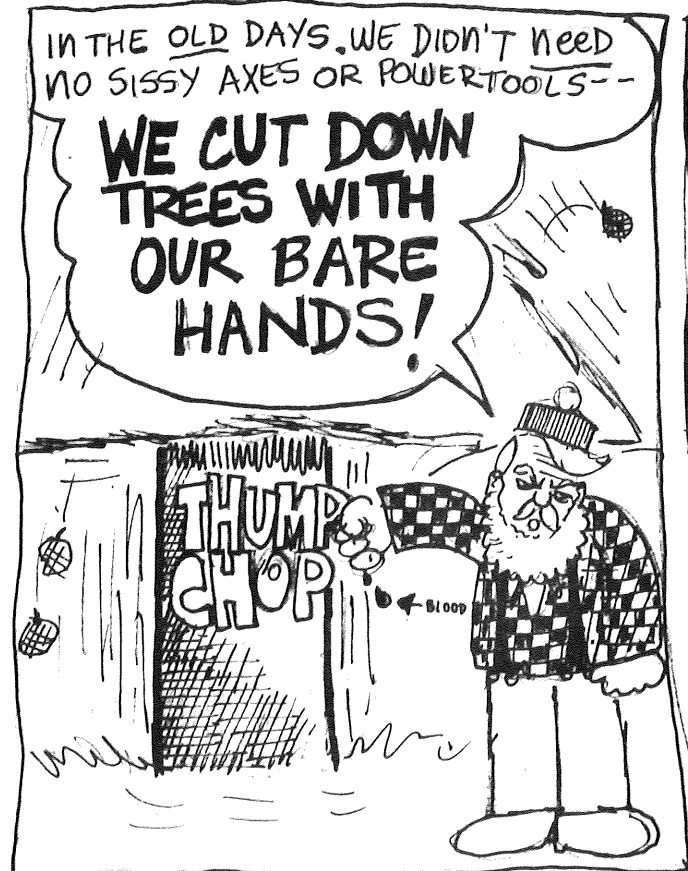
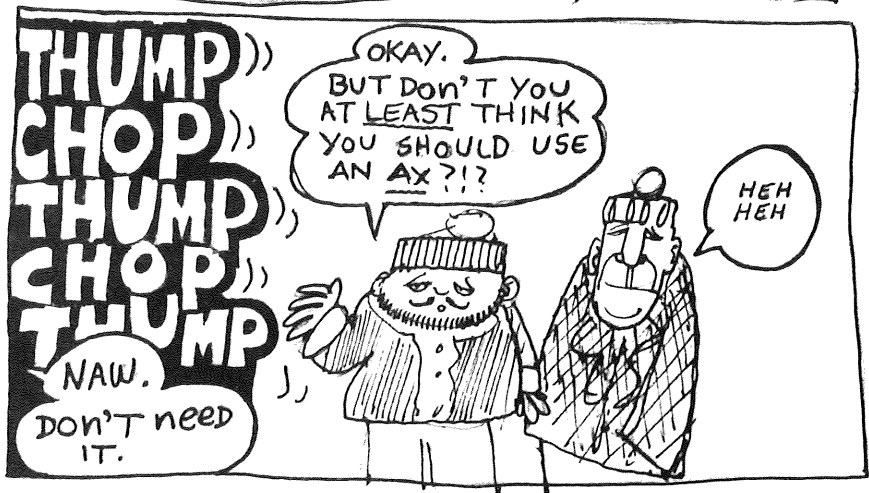
"The Team Challenge series could have been so good and it turned out so bad. Chicken eating contests? Give me a break! The Team Challenge Series will go down in wrestling history as wrestling's answer to the vasectomy, all juice and no seed." ***

POTSHOT PRESENTS...

WELCOME TO THE NORTH WOODS... LOGGING COUNTRY... AND THE HOME OF:

OLDIE ANDERSON, EX-BOOKER!

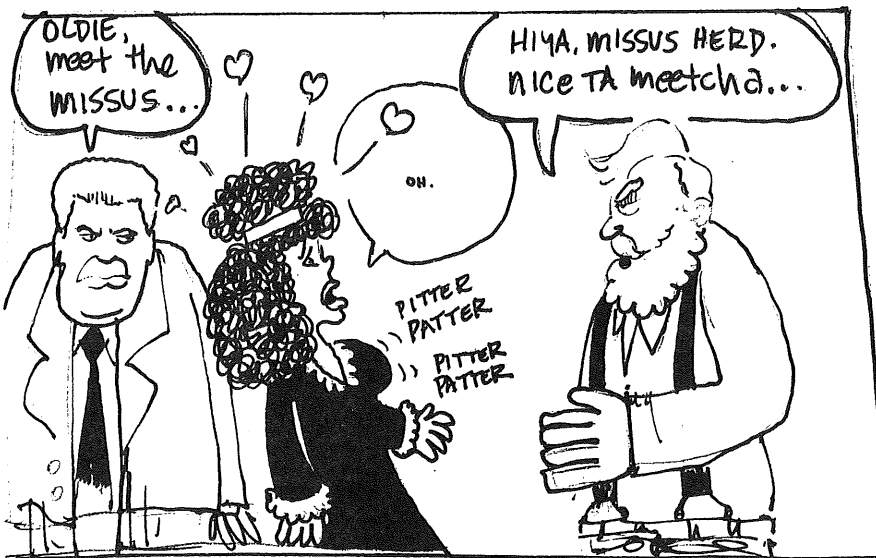
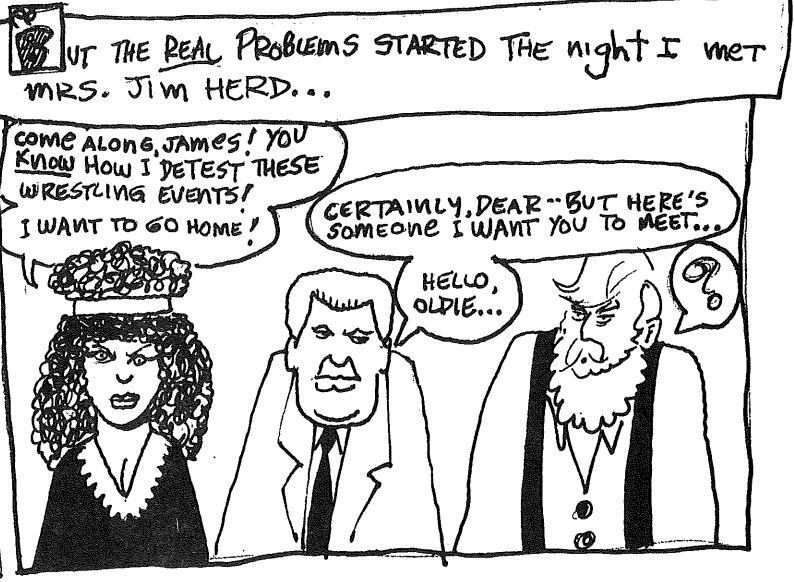
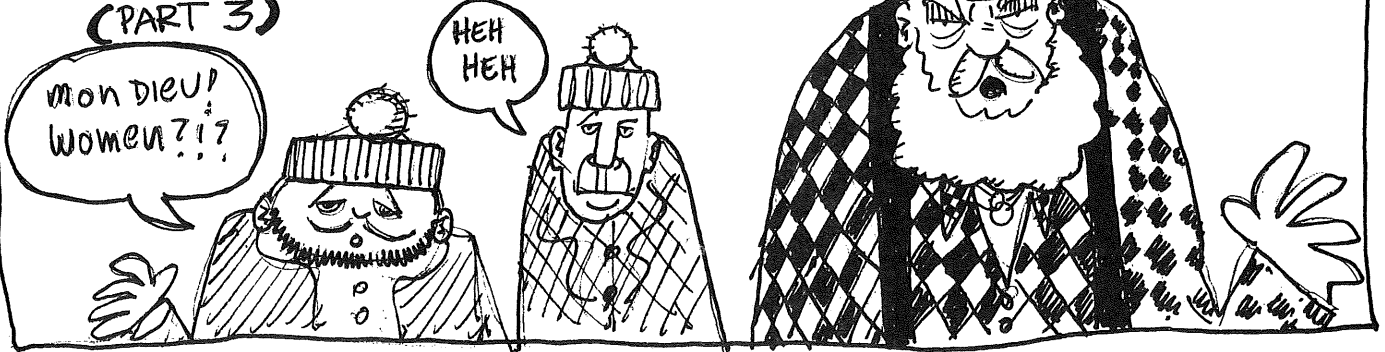
BILL KUMER ©1991

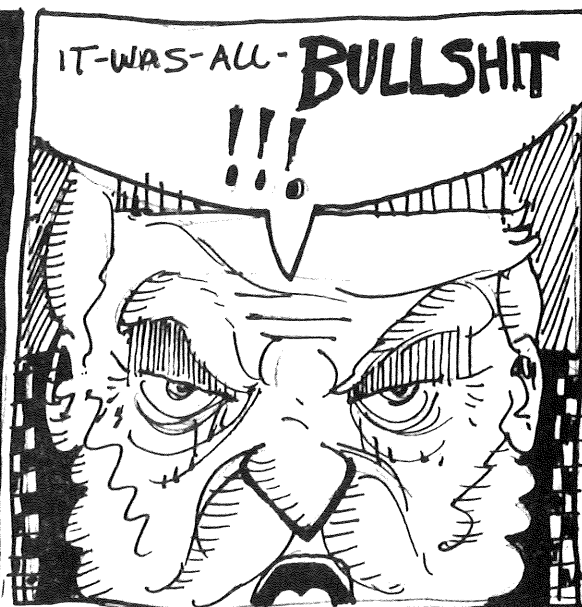
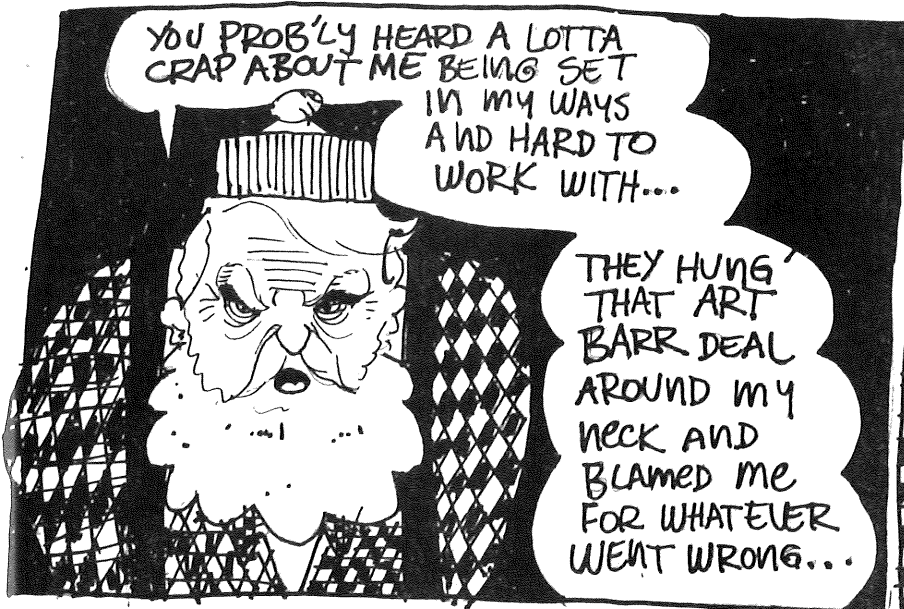
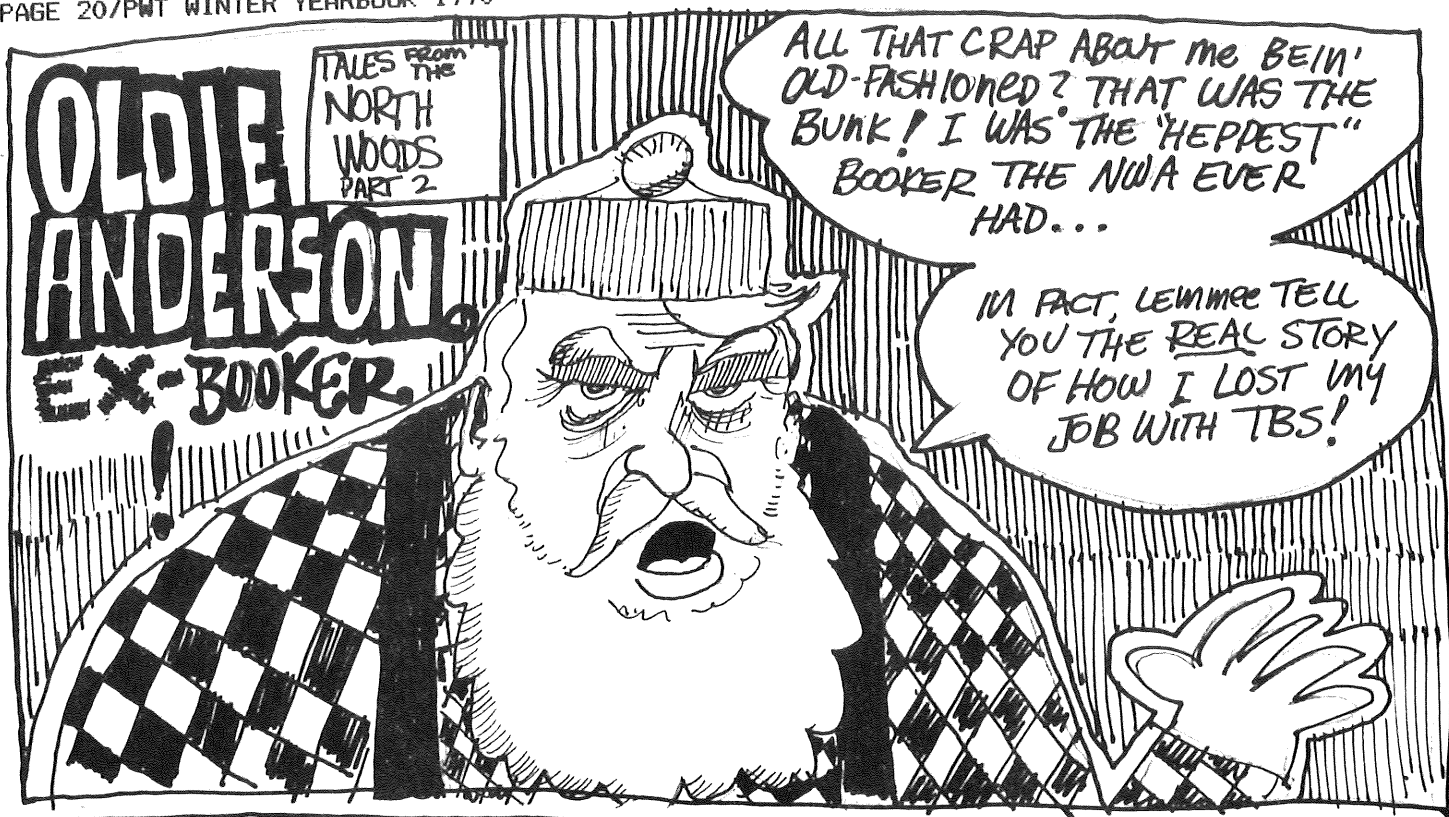


TO BE CONTINUED...

OLDIE ANDERSON EX BOOKER

(PART 3)





now I've got TWO DIPPY DAMES FOLLOWING ME AROUND LIKE LOVESICK PUPPIES... me --

OLDIE ANDERSON

□□ (SOON TO BE)

EX-BOOKER!

(PART 4)

(THE LAST OLDIE MINI-SERIES!)

OH, OLDIE -- YOU'RE THE MAN I'VE BEEN WAITING ALL MY LIFE FOR... I'VE DUMPED THAT PUNK HOT STUFF AND I'M SAVING MYSELF FOR YOU...

GRUMBLE...
SNARL...

OH, MY HIRSUTE OLDIE?

WITH MY MONEY BEHIND YOU, YOU COULD RULE THE WORLD, YOU HE-MAN, YOU!

FLUTTER!

FLUTTER!

I HADDA GET RID OF GILBERT, AND NOW I HAD SIM HERD ON MY NECK, TOO... IT WAS TIME TO TAKE EXTREME MEASURES... I DECIDED TO GIVE 'EM MY OPINIONS ON WIMMEN!

YOU KNOW, IN MY DAY, WOMEN WERE BAREFOOT, PREGNANT AND IN THE KITCHEN WHEN THEY WEREN'T IN BED! EVEN WHEN IT WAS FREEZIN' COLD, THEY NEVER PUT ON SHOES AND THEIR TOES WOULD CRACK AND FREEZE --

AND THEY LOVED IT !!

GASP!

GASP

BUT I HAD RECKONED WITHOUT MY OWN FATAL APPEAL!

I GIVE UP?

OKAY.

OKAY.

WAS ABOUT TO RUN, SCREAMING, INTO THE NIGHT, WHEN THINGS SOMEHOW GOT EVEN WORSE??

TELEPHONE, OLDIE --

..IT'S JANE FOUNDA!

GASP.

SO THAT'S IT, FOLKS -- THE REAL "UNTOLD" STORY OF MY DOWNFALL AT TBS/WCW/NWA. OH, I'LL BE BACK...

Someday... UNTIL THEN, I'LL BE UP HERE IN THE NORTH WOODS, WHERE THE WIND IS SO COLD IT CAN CRYSTALIZE YER WINGS!

AND I'LL LIKE IT!

HEH HEH
PISS ON YOU!

THE END!

READER'S

UNOFFICIAL TOP TEN LISTS

MARK BROWN'S TOP TEN ENTRANCE THEME SONGS OF 1991:

- 10) Dusty "The Midnight Booker" Rhodes - Aerosmith's "Back in the Saddle Again."
- *under the stipulation that this is to be used only for entrance to the booking office. Ring work is strictly forbidden, immediately family included."
- 9) Doom - George Thorogood's "Bad to the Bone."
- 8) Rick Steiner - The Kinks' "State of Confusion."
- 7) Cactus Jack - The Police's "State of Confusion."
- 6) Jim Cornette and Stan Lane - The Animals' "We Gotta Get Out of This Place."
- 5) Lex Luger - CCR's "Someday Never Comes."
- 4) Sting - Led Zeppelin's "What Is and What Should Never Be."
- 3) Scott Steiner - Led Zeppelin's "Your Time Is Gonna Come."
- 2) Missy Hyatt - Gets Her Choice of two Doors' classics: "Light My Fire" and "Love Me Two Times."
- 1) Ric Flair - Steely Dan's "Do It Again."

RANDY RAY'S TOP TEN REASONS TO WATCH WRESTLING ON TV IN 1990:

- 10) There's not much else on at midnight.
- 9) To keep up with the ever-changing Horsemen hairstyles.
- 8) Several updates per hour on Greyhound bus prices.
- 7) To see if the WWF has broken the Guinness Record yet for most merchandise on camera at one time.
- 6) When bored, you can count the number of Sid Vicious personality changes on any given show.
- 5) Valuable information, like what you cannot do on Nintendo.
- 4) There's always a chance that this could be the match that George South finally gets to win.
- 3) Those awesome Sting interviews.
- 2) To see everybody's favorite gimmick show, Roadkill... with Eddie Gilbert.

And the number one reason to watch wrestling in 1990:

- 1) If this is the show on which the Anabolic Warrior finally keels over, you will win the office pool!

MARK BROWN'S TOP TEN POTENTIAL SUBJECTS FOR TORCH TALK:

- 10) (tie) Steve Beverly and Dave Meltzer
- 9) Lex Luger
- 8) Ricky Steamboat
- 7) Bobby Eaton
- 6) Stan Hansen
- 5) Bill Watts
- 4) Jesse Ventura
- 3) Terry Funk
- 2) Vince McMahon
- 1) Ric Flair

(Note: Congratulations for securing Jim Cornette, who had been penciled in at #2)

CHARLES RUSSO'S TOP TEN PET PEEVES OF WADE KELLER:

- 10) After a particularly exciting match, he sometimes wets himself.
- 9) That bitch Lucy never lets Charlie Brown kick the football.
- 8) Bill Apter is always threatening to beat him up.
- 7) The peach cobbler in Swanson's TV Dinners just isn't as tasty as it used to be.

- 6) He always sits in the front row, but he can never get The Bushwackers to lick his face.
- 5) Copyright infringement.
- 4) Those darn surveillance cameras make shoplifting a chore.
- 3) Crayola has discontinued "raw umber" in its big box of crayons.
- 2) He's got more babes than he knows what to do with.

And the number one pet peeve of Wade Keller...

- 1) Top Ten Lists about him written by dorks he doesn't even know!

ELYSE ZOIS'S TOP TEN WRESTLER CHRISTMAS GIFT LISTS:

- 10) Playboy Buddy Rose - Ultra Slim Fast.
- 9) Hulk Hogan - A return match with Ultimate Warrior.
- 8) Jim Herd - A decent bookie.
- 7) Sgt. Slaughter - A return ticket to the AWA.
- 6) Ultimate Warrior - An English tutor.
- 5) Paul Roma - A new tag team partner.

- 4) Davey Boy Smith - A haircut
- 3) Roddy Piper - The I-C Title
- 2) Sting - A more exciting opponent.
- 1) Jesse "The Mayor" Ventura - My congratulations.

ELYSE ZOIS'S TOP TEN WORST DRESSED LIST:

- 10) The Brooklyn Brawler
- 9) Sherri Martel
- 8) The Bushwackers
- 7) The Freebirds
- 6) The Juicer
- 5) Saba Simba
- 4) Jim Cornette
- 3) Tugboat
- 2) Gorilla Monsoon
- 1) The Gobbledy Gooker

STEVEN CARUSO'S TOP TEN RHETORICAL QUESTIONS:

- 10) Isn't Sid Vicious The Most Popular Wrestler in Wrestling?
- 9) What Does Joe Pedicino Know About Running A Promotion?
- 8) How Does Vince McMahon Expect to Fill the L.A. Coliseum Without A Hogan-Warrior Main Event?
- 7) Don't You Hope Roddy Piper Gets Permanent Laryngitis?
- 6) Everyone Is Wondering How the AWA Will Survive Without Wrestlers. Hasn't The WWF Thrived For The Last Five Years Without Wrestlers?
- 5) Now Larry Zbyszko Has Been Stripped Of The AWA Title, Will They Give It To Eric Bischoff?
- 4) Has Bill Kunkel Apologized To Jeff Steele?
- 3) Am I The Only Person Who Thinks That The Black Scorpion Angle Was A Good Idea That War Poorly Executed?
- 2) What Will Vince McMahon Do If It Rains In L.A. on March 24?
- 1) Isn't It Obvious Ted Turner Bought WCW So He Could Have Another Non-Profitable Tax Write-Off?

LOST NAME #3'S TOP TEN MOVES THAT EXPOSE THE BUSINESS, DEDICATED TO CACTUS JACK:

- 10) Finishing Moves That Are Not Devastating: Legdrops.
- 9) Devastating Moves That Do Not Put Opponents Away: Piledrivers.
- 8) Misapplied Restholds: Bearhugs Below the Ribs, Arm Bars With No Appreciable Tension.
- 7) Missed Moves That Are Sold

Regardless of Poor Execution.

- 6) Moves That Appear Punishing That Are Not Sold: Flair's chops.
- 4) Top Rope Maneuvers That Take Too Long To Execute: The Dreaded "he's so woozy" routine.
- 3) Real Accidental Pain That Is Covered Up: If allowed, this would add to the sense that wrestling is dangerous.
- 2) Babyfaces Grandstanding or Telegraphing Moves and Never Getting Caught.
- 1) Selling of Missed Moves As Painful When They Are Not: Dropkicks.

LOST NAME #3'S TOP TEN SHAFTED OR UNDERPUSHED WRESTLERS:

- 10) Buddy Landell
- 9) Brian Pillman
- 8) Tony Schiavone
- 7) Lex Luger
- 6) Chris Cruise
- 5) Cactus Jack
- 4) Stan Lane
- 3) Jim Cornette
- 2) Ricky Steamboat
- 1) Ric Flair

LOST NAME #3'S TOP TEN HARD TO SWALLOW OVERPUSHED WRESTLERS:

- 10) El Gigante
- 9) Jim Ross
- 8) Jim Duggan
- 7) Sting
- 6) Texas Tornado
- 5) Ultimate Warrior
- 4) Big Cat/Motor City Madman/Nightstalker
- 3) Thunderbolt Patterson/Little Richard Marlay
- 2) Junkyard Dog
- 1) Black Scorpion

STEPHEN CARUSO'S TOP TEN WRESTLERS WHO ARE OLDER THAN THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN:

- 10) Nikolai Volkoff
- 9) Andre the Giant
- 8) Bobo Brazil
- 7) Dick the Bruiser
- 6) Giant Baba
- 5) Mr. Saito
- 4) Baron Von Raschke
- 3) Abdullah the Butcher
- 2) Ivan Koloff
- 1) The Original Sheik

STEVEN CARUSO'S TOP TEN CONVERSATIONS OVERHEARD AT THE WCW OFFICES:

- 10) El Gigante Is The Next World Champion.
- 9) Sign the Motor City Madman, He's a Good Wrestler.
- 8) The Master Blasters Will Make Everyone Forget The Road Warriors.
- 7) Now That Jim Cornette Is Gone, Let Us Rehire Hiro Matsuda.
- 6) What the Hell Are We Going To Do With These Extra Sting Watches?
- 5) We Can't Fire Z-Man, He's Making Too Much Money.
- 4) Ole Will Turn The Company Around.
- 3) Don't Worry Art, No One Will Mention Your Past.
- 2) I Can't Understand Why Flair Won't Change His Gimmick.
- 1) This Black Scorpion Angle Will Be Great.

STEVEN CARUSO'S TOP TEN WAYS JOE PEDICINO ACQUIRED THE 25 MILLION?

- 10) Loan From Vince McMahon.
- 9) Won the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes.
- 8) Inheritance From His Deceased Uncle Vito.
- 7) Struck Oil In Backyard.

- 6) Found It Buried In The Dallas Sportatorium.
- 5) Membership Dues From Joe Pedicino Fan Club.
- 4) Birthday Present From Jim Cornette's Mother.
- 3) Salary From Working As Dominoes Pizza Delivery Man.
- 2) Owns 45% of Nintendo Inc.
- 1) Early Christmas Gift From Santa.

TOM WISCHMANN'S TOP TEN WRESTLERS HE'D MOST LIKE TO SEE LEAVE WRESTLING:

- 10) Ole Anderson
- 9) Black Scorpion
- 8) Earthquake
- 7) Junkyard Dog
- 6) Chris Von Erich
- 5) Percy Pringle
- 4) Wayne Ferris
- 3) Buddy Rose
- 2) Gorilla Monsoon
- 1) Dave Meltzer... Just Kidding! Vince McMahon!

B.J. CONNERTON'S TOP TEN REASONS TO WATCH THE WWF:

- 10) Hoping To Hear Vince Slip Up And Call The LOD, The Road Warriors.
- 9) Bobby Heenan.
- 8) See Who Is Wrestling At The Next House Show.
- 7) Do Not Want To Miss Any Of The Hacksaw Duggan vs. Sgt. Slaughter Feud.
- 6) 13% Chance There Might Be A Match Worth Watching.
- 5) I Would Hate To Miss The WWF's Very Informative Weekly Update.
- 4) Hoping To See Someone Hit The Ultimate Warrior in the Face With A Shoot Kick And Put Him Out of Wrestling.
- 3) Waiting To See Monsoon Fall Asleep During A Bushwacker vs. Rhythm & Blues Match.
- 2) Want To See Paul Diamond's Mask Fall Off And Reveal Him To Be An American.
- 1) Hoping To See "The Baron" Return.

MICHAEL BAHN'S TOP TEN CYNICAL "BEST" ANGLES & GIMMICKS:

- 10) Demolition With Mask - I Wonder Which One Is Crush? The Short One?
- 9) Jake Roberts Eye "Injury"
- 8) Rick Rude's "Suspension" For Remarks He Didn't Even Make.
- 7) USWA Loser Eats Dog Food Match.
- 6) The Match That Never Happened: The Hart Foundation Losing the Tag Belts to The Rockers.
- 5) Hulk Hogan's "Injury" - Hulk Cannot Act or Wrestle, What Is Here To Like?
- 4) AWA's "New" Matches Taped A Year Ago.
- 3) Chris Von Erich.
- 2) The Black Scorpion.
- 1) Gobbledly Gooker.

BRENT E. CLARK'S TOP TEN WRESTLERS WHO I WOULD GO AFTER FIRST WHEN STARTING A NEW FEDERATION:

- 10) Bret Hart
- 9) Ted DiBiase
- 8) Great Muta
- 7) Brian Pillman
- 6) Rockers, My International Tag Champs
- 5) Midnight Express
- 4) Jushin Riger, My Intercontinental Champ
- 3) Mr. Perfect, My U.S. Champ
- 2) Steiners, My Tag Champs
- 1) Lex Luger, my World Champion
- Plus, Owen Hart, Bobby Eaton, Sid Vicious, Mike Rotunda, Rick Steamboat, and others.

BRENT E. CLARK'S TOP TEN ALL-STAR TAG TEAMS:

- 10) Buddy Landell & Ric Flair: The Nature Boys
- 9) Randy Savage & Jerry Lawler: The

- Kings of the Ring
- 8) Dusty Rhodes & Buddy Rose: Two Tons of Fun or The Fat Boys
- 7) Scott Steiner & Mike Rotunda: The Collegians
- 6) Ultimate Warrior & Sting: Faces of Death
- 5) The Great Muta & Ricky Steamboat: The Dragons
- 4) Hulk Hogan & Lex Luger: Team America
- 3) Bret Hart & Brian Pillman: The New Badd Company
- 2) Michael Wallstreet & Ted DiBiase: The Million Dollar Bucks
- 1) Bobby Eaton & Curt Hennig: The Perfect Team or Team Perfection

GABRIEL DAIGLE'S TOP TEN REASONS WCW WAS RIGHT IN HIRING DUSTY RHODES AS BOOKER:

- 10) He's Big. No, I Mean Really Big!
- 9) Larger Loss For Company Means Better Tax Write-Off For Ted Turner.
- 8) Herd Can Roll The Pizza and Dusty Can Just Plain Eat It.
- 7) He Knows the Real Secret Behind the Buddy Rose Blow-Away Diet.
- 6) He's the American Dream. Need We Say More?
- 5) He Does Wonders For Polka Dots.
- 4) He Will Use The Goodwill Games As His Financial Model For Success.
- 3) "Virgil" Is Greco-Roman for "Booking Genius"
- 2) Buried the UWF, Jim Crockett Promotions, and Everybody Else Simply To Feed His Own Ego. Now That's A Booker!
- 1) He Is The REAL Black Scorpion.

MICHAEL BAHN'S TOP TEN NEW CHARACTERS TO ENTER TITAN IN 1991:

- 10) The Gay Gymnast: Kevin Von Erich
- 9) Deadly Doorman: Terry Gordy
- 8) Electric Eel: Sam Houston
- 7) Friendly Freeloader: Mike Shaw, Norman
- 6) Hearty Hunter: Steve "Dr. Death" Williams
- 5) Irate Indians: The Youngbloods
- 4) Jazzy Jeff: John Tatum, California Kick
- 3) Purple Prince: Jerry Lawler, He Can't Be The King, Memphis Has One Already.
- 2) Nosy Neighbor: Greg Gagne
- 1) Obnoxious Orville: Jeff Jarrett, With Taped Glasses, Suspenders, and The Belt.

EVAN GINZBURG'S TOP TEN VINCE MCMAHON BOOKING IDEAS FOR THE NINTIES?

- 10) Fidgets (Obscure Little Rascals Reference)
- 9) Beasties
- 8) Elvises
- 7) Elves
- 6) Geeks
- 5) Ghostbusters
- 4) Ghosts
- 3) Ghoulies
- 2) Gremlins
- 1) Gobbledly Gookers

RICH DANIEL'S TOP TEN DUDS:

- 10) El Gigante
- 9) Tugboat
- 8) Earthquake
- 7) Dino Bravo
- 6) Master Blasters
- 5) Bad News Brown
- 4) Allen Iron Eagle
- 3) Motor City Madman
- 2) Nightstalker
- 1) El Gigante

RICH MOHRLAND'S TOP TEN COOL ROCK & ROLL NAMES NOT YET STOLEN:

- 10) Ziggy Stardust
- 9) Captain Sensible
- 8) Howlin' Wolf
- 7) Lux Interior
- 6) Gino Shock
- 5) Gary Glitter

- 4) King Crimson
- 3) Jo Jo Gunne
- 2) Root Boy Slim
- 1) Johnny Thunders

ERIC KROL'S TOP TEN REPLACEMENTS FOR OLE ANDERSON:

- 10) Dan Quayle
- 9) Len "Clean Finish" Denton
- 8) Saddam Hussein
- 7) Milli Vanilli
- 6) George Steinbrenner
- 5) McMahon and Patterson
- 4) Frank Dusek
- 3) Jim Herd
- 2) George Scott
- 1) Dusty Rhodes

ERIC KROL'S TOP TEN WORST/FAILED GIMMICKS OF THE MODERN ERA:

- 10) Midnight Rider
- 9) Party Crasher Sting
- 8) Michael Wallstreet
- 7) Vincent Young
- 6) Virgil
- 5) Outback Jack
- 4) Red Rooster
- 3) Gobbledly Gooker
- 2) Ding Dongs
- 1) The Black Scorpion

ERIC KROL'S TOP TEN WRESTLERS WCW SHOULD SIGN RIGHT NOW:

- 10) Chris Benoit
- 9) Cactus Jack Manson
- 8) Ted DiBiase
- 7) Owen Hart
- 6) Steve Williams
- 5) Terry Gordy
- 4) Scotty the Body Levy
- 3) Rick Rude
- 2) Bret Hart
- 1) Jushin Riger

RAY WHEBBE'S TOP TEN DIFFERENT BODIES, SAME BRAIN:

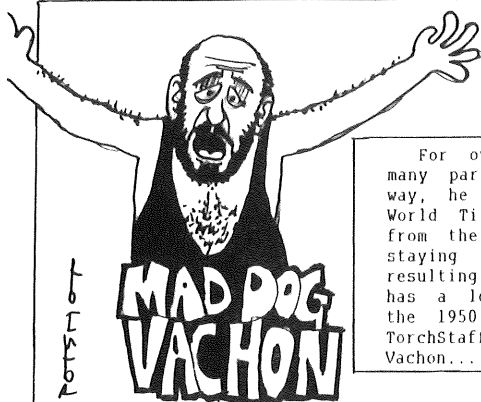
- 10) Brian Tramel: Hugh Hefner
- 9) Alan Eppenstein: Woody Allen
- 8) Verne Gagne: Jim Baker
- 7) Bruce Hart: Vincent Van Gogh
- 6) Eddie Sharkey: Rush Limbaugh
- 5) Mick Karch: Brent Musberger
- 4) Wade Keller: Lisa Olson (both unwelcome in some locker rooms)
- 3) Sandy Partlow: Ma Barker
- 2) Chris Love: Divine
- 1) Tony DeNucci: Scott Baio

RAY WHEBBE'S TOP TEN SEPARATED AT BIRTH:

- 10) Verne Gagne: Dom DeLuise
- 9) Terry Funk: Jesse James
- 8) Kevin Kelly: Nick Nolte
- 7) Gene Okerlund: Joe Gariagiola
- 6) Big Cat Curtis Houghs: Willard Scott
- 5) Jerry Lynn: Jerry Jarrett
- 4) Dusty Rhodes: Boxer Hogg Sargent
- 3) Vince McMahon: Charles Keating
- 2) Scary Sherry: Elvira
- 1) Rick Rude: Tom Sellick

RAY WHEBBE'S TOP TEN BUMPER STICKERS:

- 10) Missy Hyatt: Real Men Need Not Apply
- 9) Kevin Von Erich: I'm Not As Dumb As You Think, But I Try
- 8) Ricky Rice: Nobody Home
- 7) Rick Rude: I Do Not Want What I Do Not Have
- 6) Ric Flair: 39 and Holding
- 5) Golden Idol: Today Rome, Tomorrow The World
- 4) Ken Patera: Support Your Local Police Station
- 3) Jerry Jarrett: The Belt Is Better Than A Payday
- 2) Randy Savage: The King Has Still Risen
- 1) Vince McMahon: I Am Wallstreet



SPECIAL TORCH INTERVIEW MAD DOG VACHON

For over 35 years, Maurice "Mad Dog" Vachon was one of the best known wrestlers in many parts of the United States and Canada. He got his nickname the old fashioned way, he earned it. And from May 2, 1964 to August 21, 1985, the Mad Dog held the AWA World Title five times. He retired in the mid-eighties after making his final jump from the AWA to the WWF. Soon thereafter he retired, but that did not stop him from staying in shape. Unfortunately, while jogging one morning, he was hit by a car resulting in one of his legs being amputated. Mad Dog's spirits are still high and he has a lot of thoughts concerning his career and the development of pro wrestling from the 1950's to the 1990's. The following is a "Torch Talk" interview conducted by TorchStaffer Jeff Bowdren via telephone in December of 1990 with Maurice "Mad Dog" Vachon...

JEFF BOWDREN: FIRST OF ALL, I'M SURE A LOT OF THE READERS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW YOU ARE DOING AFTER THE INJURY YOU SUFFERED A WHILE BACK.

MAD DOG VACHON: Well, I have my ups and down. It's tough having been an athlete my whole life. I talked with Steve Olsonoski a while back about his hand and told him, "Hey, you can't give up. You've gotta keep trying."

BOWDREN: LET'S START AT THE BEGINNING. YOU REPRESENTED CANADA IN THE 1948 OLYMPICS. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

VACHON: Oh, that was fantastic. I started wrestling when I was 13. My father was a policeman in Montreal and he wanted me to be a boxer. He took me to the gym and the trainer says to my father, "Ah, you don't want him to be a boxer, he'll be punchy in a few years. Let him wrestle." Frank Zackson was the wrestling coach then. It was not like it is now, you know, with classes all over the country. So he tells my dad to let me try wrestling. So I went to London in the 1948 Olympics as a middle weight. My dad told me if I ever went to the Olympics, people would always remember that. And truer words were never spoken.

BOWDREN: NOW HOW DID THE TRANSITION OCCUR WITH YOU BECOMING A PRO WRESTLER?

VACHON: Well, I thought after having been in the Olympics and then in the British Empire Games, the transition would be very easy. I was very wrong (laughs). At that time there was wrestling every Wednesday night at the Montreal Forum. Then TV started in Montreal in 1951 or 52. Well, I finally got a match at the Forum, an opening match and I got \$200. Well, that was like a million dollars to me. Then I didn't wrestle at the Forum for a year or two after that. So the next few years I wrestled here or there for 15 or 20 dollars. Then in 1953 a promoter called me and said he had a promotion in Northern Ontario that he was going to run for about six months and he offered me \$350 a week. That was a fortune back then. And one of the refs there, he knew Morris Seigel who was a promoter in Texas and he told me he could get me in there. So I stayed in Texas for five or six months and then I'd come back to Montreal for the Summer.

BOWDREN: AT THIS POINT, HAD YOU ADOPTED THE PERSONA OF MAD DOG VACHON?

VACHON: No, that was later. So from Texas I went to Georgia and then to Florida and so on. Some territories I would make good money, some territories just so-so, but it balanced. What made it difficult was I had a family and we travelled everywhere by car. It was a struggle to get to the top. I guess you could say it was a "dog eat dog world."

BOWDREN: JUST LIKE THE SHIRTS USED TO SAY.

VACHON: That's right.

BOWDREN: SO WHEN WAS YOUR FIRST CONTACT WITH THE AWA?

VACHON: That wasn't until about 1961. Before that I worked for Ed Francis who promoted Hawaii. So I put my time in with Ed Francis and one day I got a call from Don Owen who promoted in Portland.

BOWDREN: EVEN BACK THEN, HUH?

VACHON: Yeah, and he tells me he wants me to wrestle there. So I go, "Okay." So I'm standing in the ring the night of my first match in Portland and then I remembered someone had told me the guys in Portland were pretty tough and that they might try to do a number on me. So I attacked my guy before the bell and threw him out of the ring. The ref tries to stop me and I throw him down. And then this cop grabbed me from behind so grab him and throw him into the third row. So I get suspended. But I get back to the dressing room and Don Owen tells me, "You were great. You look just like a Mad Dog!"

BOWDREN: AND IT STUCK FROM THERE, HUH? WHAT HAPPENED AFTER PORTLAND?

VACHON: Well, I was going to Montreal for the summer and I called Wally Karbo in Minneapolis. He said, "Yeah, I've heard of you. You're the Mad Dog." So I worked a few shows here and there, coming and going from here to

Montreal. And I told them that I would like to work Minneapolis regularly. So I called them in November of 1963 and told them that I wanted to come in. Well, he said that he didn't have a spot for me at that point, but if I wanted to I could go work in Nebraska for Joe Dusek. He told me that Joe was a real square guy and I get there and Joe tells me that the territory is down and the guys are only making about \$200 a week. But if you bring it up, it's going to be yours. Well, I did that and I was averaging about \$800 a week which was fantastic back then and a year later I got the World Title from Verne Gagne.

BOWDREN: DURING YOUR LONG STINT IN THE AWA WERE YOU STILL MAKING THE SIDE-TRIPS TO MONTREAL?

VACHON: During the summer when I was World Champ I was very recognizable in Montreal and was something of a celebrity.

BOWDREN: AT WHAT POINT DID YOUR BROTHER, PAUL, JOIN YOU?

VACHON: Well, when I was in Hawaii, Paul was in Calgary working for Stu Hart and a promoter was putting together a tour of Australia. Well, a few days before the tour was set to go, I decided I didn't want to go. I called Paul to see if he wanted to take my spot. This would have been about 1951. He said, "Yeah, sure. Why not." So the next day he's in Hawaii and we're having lunch and that night I saw my kid brother onto a plane for Australia. I didn't see him again for seven years. He wrestled all over India, Africa, and England. So finally, he comes back to Montreal and he's Paul "The Butcher" Vachon. So they booked "The Mad Dog" and "The Butcher" against The Crusher and The Bruiser and we sold out the place. We were tag champs for two years going all over the world, you know, like Japan.

BOWDREN: HOW DID YOU LIKE WORKING IN JAPAN?

VACHON: It was all right, I guess. No one spoke any English over there. But they're very honest and polite. The country's very beautiful.

BOWDREN: YOU PRIMARILY STAYED ASSOCIATED WITH THE AWA THROUGH 1984 AND 85, THEN YOU HAD A STINT WITH TITAN SPORTS.

VACHON: Well, I wasn't trying to kid myself. I knew I was near the end of my career and I saw it as an opportunity to get a payday, but I really wasn't kidding myself.

BOWDREN: NOW YOU HAVE NIECE ANGEL, WHO WRESTLES AS LUNA VACHON. WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THAT?

VACHON: Well, it's gonna' be hard. A woman's body is not made to take that kind of punishment. Come to think of it, no one's body is made for that.

BOWDREN: WHAT ABOUT HER GIMMICK? IS SHE SORT OF LIKE A FEMALE MAD DOG OR DOES SHE TAKE IT ONE STEP FURTHER?

VACHON: I think she takes it one step further. She's very good at what she does. It's unfortunate that there's not more work for someone like her. She really does love the business but it's harder for a woman to make a living at it.

BOWDREN: OKAY, HERE'S A STANDARD QUESTION I ASK THE OLDER WRESTLERS. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF WRESTLING TODAY?

VACHON: It's funny, twenty years ago I told Paul and my sister Vivian that big-time wrestling was still to come.

BOWDREN: DID YOU SEE WRESTLING GOING MORE TOWARD THE MORE MUSCULAR GUY WHO HAD LESS ABILITY?

VACHON: Not in that sense. I mean with TV. People forget that wrestling helped make TV popular. The TV people needed something to fill their time, so they discovered wrestling. The movie people didn't want to give TV their movies because they thought nobody would come to see their movies at the theatre so wrestling was a great filler. People used to stand outside TV stores in Montreal and watch wrestling through the windows. And when cable came on, they had to fill space, and went back to wrestling.

BOWDREN: WOULD YOU SAY WRESTLING HELPED MAKE TV AND NOW TV IS HELPING TO KILL WRESTLING?

VACHON: Well, maybe. But before it did, it helped wrestling make millions of dollars.

BOWDREN: BUT A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK THAT ONE OF WRESTLING'S BIGGEST PROBLEMS IS OVEREXPOSURE ON TV.

VACHON: Well, the same thing happened in Montreal. When TV first came on, they went from having 15,000 at the Forum to having an empty arena. Because everyone was watching it on TV. You know Vince McMahon, he made millions off of Wrestlemania, so it doesn't matter. It's like, if a big supermarket opens next to your family corner store and you go out of business, what do they care, because they're still making money. So it's impossible to kill wrestling.

BOWDREN: WHY IS THAT?

VACHON: When all the Wrestlemanias are done, the small promotions will come back. It's a cycle that keeps repeating. Today is exactly what was happening in 1950 when television first came around. The more things change the more they stay the same.

BOWDREN: BUT IN TEN YEARS WHEN WRESTLING BEGINS TO GO THROUGH THE CYCLE AGAIN, WILL THAT ERA'S NEW GUY, THE ONE WHOSE NAME WILL DOMINATE, SUCH AS GORGEOUS GEORGE OR HULK HOGAN, WILL HE HAVE TO BE THE OPPOSITE OF HOGAN, SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

VACHON: Not necessarily. Who's to say what's going to be hot in ten years. It depends on what the promoter is looking for. Thirty years ago, no one was better than Buddy Rogers. He had it all. But no one remembers him anymore. Five years ago, everyone knew I was the Mad Dog; now they don't even recognize me. A few years from now, Hulk Hogan will be a souvenir from the past.

BOWDREN: DO YOU LOOK AT HULK HOGAN AS A FAD?

VACHON: Everyone's a fad. I mean, when you die, you're dead. Out of sight, out of mind. What's gonna happen down the road? Who knows, but wrestling will always be there.

BOWDREN: OKAY, LET'S THROW SOME NAMES OUT AND GET SOME THOUGHTS: NICK BOCKWINKEL?

VACHON: Lot of class. Lot of talent. I think he was a great champion. Didn't drink or smoke. Very articulate. He looked the part.

BOWDREN: BOBBY HEENAN?

VACHON: Very intelligent guy. Great gift of gab and he made money from it, too.

BOWDREN: EDWARD CARPENTIER?

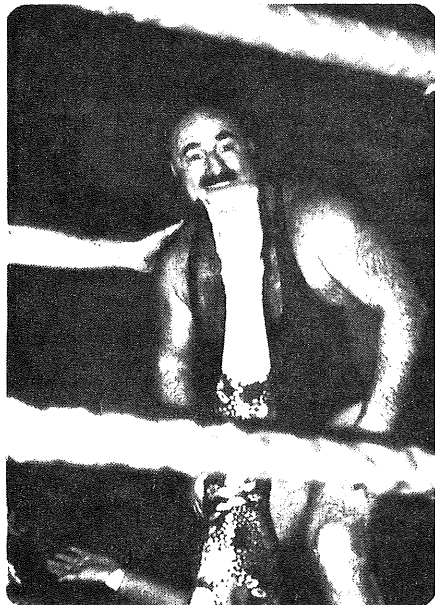
VACHON: Here was a guy in tremendous shape. I think he revolutionized the business with his acrobatics.

BOWDREN: HULK HOGAN?

VACHON: He was definitely a man of his time. He was in the right place at the right time. But Hulk Hogan did not happen overnight. It took years of dedication and hard work and it paid off for him.

BOWDREN: I DON'T KNOW IF YOU WERE IN THE AWA WHEN THIS GUY WAS FIRST STARTING, BUT WHAT ABOUT RIC FLAIR?

VACHON: Ric Flair used to be my brother Paul's paperboy



MAD DOG VACHON (Karch Collection)

when he was a kid. He used to tell us that he was going to be a wrestler one day. But he is very talented and intelligent.

BOWDREN: DO YOU FOLLOW THE LINE OF THINKING THAT FLAIR IS A COPY OF BUDDY ROGERS?

VACHON: No. I'm sure he borrowed some things from Buddy Rogers. You could also say that Rogers borrowed from Gorgeous George. Everyone has their own style. They may have been similar, but they're different.

BOWDREN: HERE IS A NAME I AM ALMOST COMPELLED TO BRING UP. ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH KARL GOTCH?

VACHON: Very much so. I met him in the 1948 Olympics. He is a great man and a great wrestler. It's too bad he couldn't adjust to our business which was professional wrestling. It's a waste of talent that he could only get to use it in the gym. It's good to wrestle amateur, but you're not going to do that your whole life. Karl Gotch, whether he was right or wrong, wanted the business to change for him and he can't do that. When I became the "Mad Dog," I accepted that. It made me money. I changed. If I wanted to remain an amateur, I could have remained in Iowa, but you have to adjust to the business. If not, you'll perish and that's what happened to him. He knew what to do, he just didn't want to listen. I remember when he was in Quebec, the fans thought he was the greatest thing they had ever seen, but it just wasn't enough.

BOWDREN: WAS IT A CASE OF KARL GOTCH BEING THE GREATEST WRESTLER NO ONE EVER PAID TO SEE?

VACHON: Exactly. He was one of the greatest wrestlers of all time. But it was because of himself, the way he turned out.

BOWDREN: WAS HE THE TOUGHEST GUY YOU EVER SAW IN THE BUSINESS?

VACHON: One of them. Him and Billy Robinson, Killer Kowalski, and Don Leo Jonathan. But the toughest guy ever was the Giant. I only heard of one guy trying to mess with him, that was that South African guy, John Wilkins. Andre hit him with one punch and Wilkins was unconscious the whole afternoon.

BOWDREN: WHAT ABOUT VINCE MCMAHON JR.?

VACHON: Well, the guy's a genius. There's no doubt about that. He was in the right place at the right time.

BOWDREN: HAS VINCE AND HIS STYLE OF PROMOTING BEEN GOOD OR BAD FOR PROFESSIONAL WRESTLING?

VACHON: Well, it's made a lot of money for a lot of people. It made Vince millions. Wrestling is like any other sport. They're after the dollar you have in your pocket.

BOWDREN: WELL, LET ME PUT IT ANOTHER WAY. IF VINCE HAS BEEN GOOD FOR VINCE, HAS HE NECESSARILY BEEN GOOD FOR PRO WRESTLING? I SUSPECT VERNE GAGNE AND SOME OF THE SOUTHERN PROMOTERS WILL TELL YOU THAT VINCE MCMAHON KILLED WRESTLING.

VACHON: Well, of course he did. But he also brought pro wrestling into the big time. In doing so, he killed the small territories. So I guess in some ways he's been good and in some ways he's been bad.

BOWDREN: DID YOU EVER MEET VINCE MCMAHON SR.?

VACHON: Oh sure. I remember once we had a meeting with Senior. Paul and I flew into New York and were talking about a lot of different things. Junior didn't say a word during the whole meeting, but he sure was listening to every word we said. He soaked it up like a sponge. Whether you like Junior or not, you have to give the devil his due.

BOWDREN: WAS SENIOR A PRETTY STRAIGHT GUY?

VACHON: Very nice man. Very honest.

BOWDREN: DID YOU EVER WORK FOR PAUL BOESCH?

VACHON: Oh, sure, many times. He was very honest. He and Don Owen and Joe Dusek were a pleasure to work for.

BOWDREN: IS IT TOUGH TO BE AN HONEST PROMOTER TODAY?

VACHON: It's tough to be a promoter, period, today. You don't necessarily have to be a bad guy, but it's sort of like Trump in New York. Sometimes you have to step on toes. You can't please everyone all the time. It's a tough business. Before when the territories were strong, they were the only show in town. Then they get some competition. Verne Gagne had a chance to do it (break out nationally) back in 1982. I was there with The Crusher, Baron Von Raschke, Tito Santana, Rick Martel, Hulk Hogan. He had everything but he just couldn't see the big picture.

BOWDREN: WHICH IS SUPPOSE BRINGS US TO VERNE. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HIM?

(VACHON continued on page 53)

THE LEGEND OF THE SUPERSLAYER

BY MICK KARCH



MICK "SUPERSLAYER" KARCH
(Karch Collection)

After all of these years, one of the best kept secrets in professional, or in this case, semi-pro wrestling is going to be revealed. There have been many great masked men in the history of this sport. Bill Eadie as The Masked Superstar, Dick Beyer as The Destroyer and Mr. X, Big Bill Miller as the Mysterious Mr. M, Don Jardine as The Spoiler and Super Destroyer, Bob Remus as Super Destroyer Mark II, and Mick Karch as The Super Slayer... Say what? A typographical error? A pipe dream? Delusions of Grandeur? No folks, I am here to say - make that testify - to the reader of this feature I was parading around the Minneapolis/St. Paul area from 1978 through 1986 as "The Masked Super Slayer." Why open up now? Why reveal one of the last great mysteries in wrestling? Because, dear readers, as I recently celebrated by 40th birthday, I took a look in the mirror, noticed the recent arrival of some grey hairs - just a few, mind you - a slight protuberance in the midriff area - I repeat, just slight - and resign myself to the fact, in all likelihood, it just ain't gonna happen anymore. So, like more world renowned personalities do, I have decided to release my memoirs. Richard Nixon, move over, you have got nothing on me.

My pseudo career actually began in the late-1960's, when as the neighborhood savior I would rid our zip code - I think they were called zones in those days - of various and sundry evildoers that wanted to join our troop of a half-dozen weekend warriors who entertained kids around the neighborhood. We would wrestle on blankets or on mats in backyards in makeshift rings, usually a couple three-foot stakes hammered into the ground and surrounded with clotheslines. We were never extravagant enough to afford turnbuckles. That was pretty much the extent of what we did until about 1974. And then, as they say, the rest is history. Mick Karch was transformed from a clean, scientific grappler into "Mingo the Gunner," a rule-breaker who showed no mercy for his opponents who in fact became the World Champion of the "Professional Wrestling Association," the original PWA. Mingo hung on to his championship by any means possible. He withstood the challenges of "Woody Davis," who in reality was Joe Held, nostalgia columnist for Kris Pope's Bump newsletter. Marv Marv, the dancing machine, wrestling promoter and journalist, Marvin Joel, and even Big Tom Jesus, a three-hundred-plus pounder who was our answer to the Hillbillies or Haystack Calhoun.

I should back up a step for a very integral part of my early career that is certainly as important as anything that followed. In the summer of 1971 and into the winter of 1972, Mick Karch had a series of matches with Paul Pershman, who under the hood was the "Masked Doctor Death;" Steve Williams, eat your heart out. At the time, we wrestled not only in front of hand-fuls of fans in back yards but also at a campus activity center at the University of Minnesota in front of an estimated 400 onlookers. Once, in fact, Nick Bockwinkel's late brother, Dennis, who was an AWA wrestler and referee at the time and who was in charge of the set-up of the ring of the AWA, managed to sneak us the ring for a day for a neighborhood

card in Richfield, Minnesota where Karch won via disqualification over Pershman/Dr. Death. Of course, most of you are aware Pershman, 175 pounds at the time, now weighs 335 as "Playboy" Buddy Rose. I contend to this day that I was the one who really got his career going, and thus should be entitled royalties.

Back to 1974, which is when it all broke loose. All this time our contingency of wrestlers was expanding. We were terrified that the AWA would get wind of what we were doing and try to put a stop to it. I was working as a publicity writer for the AWA at the time and knew very well if they knew of my extra curricular activity they would insist I stop doing it. Why would the AWA even care about such a harmless venture. In those days, the business itself was much more protected than it is now. The "sheets" were nonexistent as were the likes of the Eddie Mansfields and Jim Wilsons of the world who "exposed" wrestling on 20/20 in 1985. Do not forget, this was the AWA. But lo and behold, the AWA did get wind of it and they were not happy. The free passes I received for covering the AWA in local tabloids were cut off. I was told in no uncertain terms to stay away from the locker rooms and ring areas. In short, I just was not welcome anymore. It was only after begging and pleading that I regained my access. Temporarily, at least, the wrestling career, such as it was, came to a screeching halt. Until 1978 that is. It was then that "The Super Slayer" was born.

I donned a hood straight out of the wrestling catalog and came out of retirement. This time we were not relegated to back yards. Though we did not have a ring, we graduated to city parks and recreation centers, running cards pretty much on a weekly basis. The troop had grown to better than two dozen wrestlers and we gained such notoriety, when there were neighborhood festivals at these parks, the organizers called on us to appear. We were fixtures at a half dozen of these parks and rec centers for about eight years. Super Slayer picked up where Mingo the Gunner left off, winning the championship. Mingo incidentally dropped out of sight after defeating Lou Thesz in Honolulu, Hawaii and then being permanently suspended for striking an official and the mayor causing a full-scale riot, or so the story goes.

In reality, I did cause riots at some of these parks. I was one hell of a heel. The crowd would go into an uproar while chanting "take off the mask" and cheering on whatever opponent I happened to be facing that night. I was joined in villainhood by PWA, AWA, and NWA referee and photographer Bruce Kreitzman who also donned a hood and was my tag team partner, "The Strangler." Quite often park



SUPERSLAYER AND STRANGLER
(Karch Collection)

officials were petrified because we did work the crowd into a frenzy. One evening after I had subdued an opponent with a foreign object, I made my way back to the locker room only to find the door locked. As I panted frantically for someone to open the door I was pelted with full, unopened pop cans and whipped with belts that overzealous fans had taken off. I kid you not.

Did we get paid for these ventures? Hardly ever. We did it because we had that burning desire to be wrestlers and satisfy out egos. Injuries? There were many. One of our wrestlers broke his ankle. Another hurt his lower back so often that he still has trouble with it to this day. One evening in a tag match, Strangler and I were run head first into each other by our opponents so hard that I split my eyelid open right through the mask and wound up with a grotesque black eye.

(LEGEND continued on page 30)

EXPLORING JAPANESE WRESTLING WITH STEVE GERBER, MIKE LANO, AND CHRIS ZAVISA

Pro wrestling in Japan is described in many ways by many different people. Many people have a view of Japanese wrestling through a television screen and video tapes. Others have visited there in person. Others have wrestled in Japan. Of course, there are still those who refuse to do anything more than acknowledge its existence because it is too far away to fully appreciate. Whatever category you may place yourself in, one of the previously mentioned categories or another one, the following three articles by Mike Lano, Steve Gerber, and Chris Zavisa will bring you closer to that Far Eastern art known as Japanese pro wrestling.

Steve Gerber begins with a two page feature detailing his week long trip to Japan during the first week of 1991. He details the obstacles, the joys, and the discoveries of his first trip to "Wrestling Heaven."

Mike Lano, who accompanied Steve and several others on the trip, presents a four page feature about the emotions, the differences between the various promotions, and the personalities of some of the top Japanese stars he was privileged to meet. No other articles I have read has brought me as close to being in Japan and experiencing pro wrestling these articles by Mike and Steve.

The three part feature, "Exploring Japanese Wrestling," concludes with Torch Weekly's Japan columnist Chris Zavisa's top seven justifications supporting the argument that Japanese pro wrestling is superior to the States' and Canada's product. Some will agree one-hundred percent, others will be angered and disagree, while others will simply learn more about what makes Japanese wrestling uniquely different from all other versions of the sport. After reading the following three articles, chances are you will have a greater understanding of the entire Japanese wrestling scene. Anyone who has been to Japan and seen Japanese wrestling live will tell you there is no way to know or to feel what it is truly like to be there without visiting, but this three part feature does its best to bring you a close to Japan as possible from the comfort of your reclining chair...

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ジミー・スヌーカ
キング・ハク
.....他

WWE (SUPER) WORLD SPORTS
WWE WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION
WWE (SUPER) WORLD SPORTS

JAPAN: WRESTLING HEAVEN

By: Steve Gerber

Greg scouted the Oriental women. Dr. Mike brought along 170 rolls of film. Andy proved he could fall asleep anywhere, anytime. Ken was a dead-ringer for Bushwacker Luke. Glenn became our resident expert on the Japan Line trains. Lenny never wanted to see seafood again. Bobby fell in love at the Japan Women's card. Dory and Michelle almost never made it out of New York City. And I kept thinking this was all a dream. And so was born "The Tokyo Ten."

It all started when Kurt Brown, a good friend and fellow employee at my place of work, returned from his trip to Japan with Dave Meltzer back in June of 1990. His stories of the people, the places, and the wrestling so enthralled me that I swore that I would one day see these for myself. Then it hit me. Why not organize a group of fellow grappling fans to go to Japan? At first, it sounded easy. And with the greater the number going, the less it would cost us each. Well, as with all things, what at first seems simple quickly becomes complicated. All in all, almost forty people called me to express interest in the trip. When it came time to send in deposits, only ten of us were left. Fine. A smaller group can be more intimate and a lot less work coordinating everything. As the time to our departure came closer, last minute plans and decision had to be made. How many cards could we afford and stay within our budget? What was the best way to get around while in Japan? Where would we pick up our tickets to the matches? I found that these issues and many others would cause me quite a few restless nights.

But, at last, the time had arrived. Our travel agent had suggested we meet the day before our flight from Los Angeles International Airport to Tokyo to assure all connecting flights from other parts of the country would not hinder us. Since members of our group came from North Carolina, Georgia, New York, and Washington, the advice was taken.

New Year's Eve was spent in a hotel room watching tapes of Jushin Riger, Atsushi Onita, Chigusa Nagayo, and Dump Matsumoto. The thought that in just a few short hours we would be seeing some of these athletes in person was almost unbelievable.

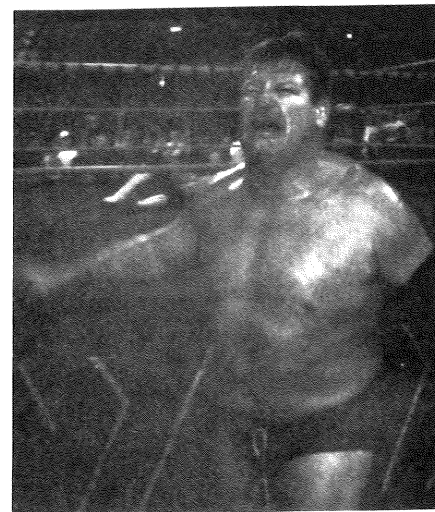
Finally, the time had come. After exchanging our money for Japanese yen at the airport, we boarded our Joreon Airlines 747. The flight from LAX to Tokyo took a little over ten hours. Everyone on board seemed very excited and we all glanced out eagerly for our first glimpse of Japan as we neared final approach. Due to cloud cover from a just-finished rain, not much was seen until almost touching ground. Narita Airport, which serves the Tokyo area, looks like just about any other airport I have seen, so I felt a little let down.

Customs and the immigration check points were mere formalities and we passed through quickly. This was our first taste of the efficiency of the Japanese people. It was not to be our last. We obtained our Japan Rail passes inside the terminal. This proved to be a wonderful bargain, as it provided unlimited travel on all JR line trains for a set period of time, ours were for seven days. Since traveling by rail for longer distances is quite expensive, there is an apparent black market for these passes, which are for sale to tourists only and only outside of Japan. You exchange your sales voucher for the actual pass when you enter the country and only when showing your passport.

The forty mile trip from Narita Airport to our hotel, The Keio Plaza, was eye-opening. It lasted over two and a half hours! This showed us another truth about Japan - it is very crowded. There was never a time that we saw their tollways - same as our freeways - when they were not jammed with traffic, day or night. This probably explains why most of the city's 17 million people commute by rail.

After finally arriving and checking in, it was time to explore. Dr. Mike Lano knew that the American's who work for the All-Japan promotion stay at the Ginga Tokyo Hotel, so we knew what our first stop was going to be. A brief subway ride later and we were there. It turned out that most of the wrestlers were in their rooms asleep since they had just arrived a short time before and had already worked an afternoon show. However, Stan Hansen was reached and agreed to come down and meet the group. Stan turned out to be more than friendly and conversed for more than an hour with us in the hotel lobby. He has some pretty strong viewpoints about why the wrestling business is on the wane here in the United States. He was equally full of praise for how things are done in Japan. His viewpoints, it is safe to say, were shared by us by the end of our trip.

Our first actual wrestling card was the next day. The All-Japan men put on a show in the afternoon at what became our home away from home: Korakuen Hall. The Hall is located right next door to the Tokyo Egg Dome. Three



STAN HANSEN (By Keller)

elevators and a staircase serve as the only entrance to this mecca of Tokyo wrestling. A single set of doors is the only way in, upon arriving at the fifth floor. Once inside the doors, there is a single concession stand and crowded souvenir tables, usually manned by the preliminary wrestlers. The Hall itself reminds me of a high school basketball gymnasium and holds approximately 2300 people, including standing room in the back and in two small balconies.

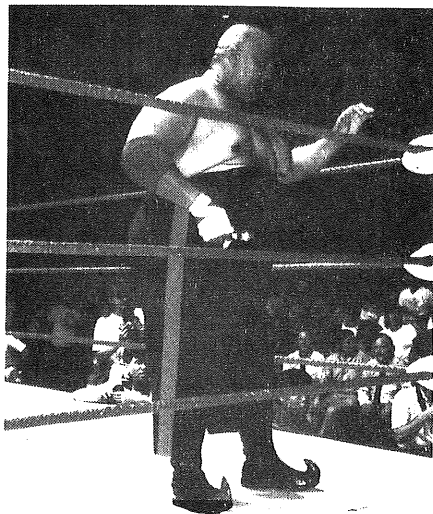
The All-Japan promotion seems to draw a slightly older crowd and mainly men. I was surprised at how quietly the fans would sit during most of the matches. You could actually hear the grunting, groaning, and hard breathing in the ring. This quiet does not signify boredom. On the contrary, it implies intense concentration and vivid interest. It was only when outstanding highspots or rapid near falls took place that the crowd became quite animated and loud.

The All-Japan promotion features mainly older stars and the cards contain more foreign name talent than any of the other promotions we saw. Top stars include Giant Baba, the owner of the promotion, Jumbo Tsuruta, former holder of the AWA Heavyweight Title, Mitsuhara Misawa, and Toshiaki Kawada. Foreign stars who frequent All-Japan mats include Stan Hansen, Danny Spivey, Abdullah the Butcher, Steve Williams, Terry Gordy, and The Fantastics.

The bouts themselves are generally slower and less physical than on the New-Japan men cards, but there are exceptions.

After the card, we were privileged to be invited over to Wally Yamaguchi's house. Wally is the owner of Maniax, which advertises regularly in The Wrestling Observer, and sells videotapes, programs, books, and other wrestling-oriented paraphernalia. According to my guidebooks, it is a very rare honor to be invited over to a Japanese person's home, since most are self-conscious about the small size of their residence. Therefore, most entertaining is done at restaurants and sporting events. However, Wally proved to be an extremely generous and friendly host. His English is excellent, which we found out is a rare commodity in Tokyo. Wally really came through for the group and helped us to obtain tickets to sold out shows, vouched for press credentials, and ringside photo grappler privileges. We owe him a lot for the success of our trip. He even treated us all to an American-style dinner, complete with fried chicken, and pizza with pepperoni and corn toppings. Wally's generosity enabled us to see another side of Japan we otherwise would not have been able to. Although his house is small by our standards, every inch of space is used in an efficient manner. Also, in keeping with custom, we removed our shoes before entering his home. Since the floor coverings are woven mats instead of carpeting, it is easy to understand the purpose of this country-wide tradition.

The next day, we were back to Korakuen for two shows in a row. The first was the All-Japan Women's group. This promotion, I feel, is by far and away the best wrestling group in the world in terms of both sheer athleticism and entertainment. During semi-yearly tryouts, hundreds of teenage girls audition for one or two openings. Due to the extreme physical demands of their ringstyle, the girls face a mandatory retirement age of 23. After seeing two of



ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER (By Keller)

their cards I can understand why. During its heyday in the mid-eighties, this group produced the pop idols The Crush Girls and the ultimate "bad girl," Dump Matsumoto. Top stars for the group now include Bull Nakano, Dump's former tag team partner, Aja Kong, Bison Kimura, Akira Hokuto, and Suzuka Minami.

The dedication of these wrestlers really shows as everyone helps in various areas. The prelim girls help setup the ring, man the souvenir stands before the card, wrestle, then come back to ringside to observe the veterans at work, and then finally help tear down the ring after the card is over. Whew! And all this without complaint. I saw this process repeated every day on our tour by both the women and the prelim men. Everyone takes their job seriously and gives it their all. The veterans train the newcomers in the ring before and after the paying customers are allowed into the hall. Everyone takes their job seriously and gives it their all. The veterans train the newcomers in the ring before and after the paying customers are allowed into the hall. Everyone works out before the card using lifecycles, light to medium weights, and taking falls in ring drills.

The same evening we got our first taste of the New-Japan men's promotion. Korakuen Hall was full of aggressive, pushy fans, mainly makes in their twenties to thirties.

This group uses an extremely physical mat-style with mainly native Japanese stars. Top grapplers includes Riki Choshu, Tatsumi Fujinami, Masa Saito, Keiji Mutoh, and Masahiro Chono. Owner and political figure Antonio Inoki is never too far out of the spotlight. Top promotion also features Jushin Riger who is considered by some to be the best worker in the business. He curiously is not receiving much of a push at this point, being mainly relegated to middle of the card tag team matches. While his high spots on the three cards we saw were few, they were definite high points of the card.

After the card, the group treated Wally to dinner at a traditional Japanese restaurant. This meant removing our shoes and sitting cross-legged at a low table. The meal consisted of cabbage salad, rice, beef tongue, and ox-tail soup. Most of us were not aware of what we were eating until afterwards, and some were more than a little disgusted! The meal was just under \$20 a person, and was, by far our most expensive meal thus far. It is, by the way, quite possible to find reasonably priced food in Japan. As a matter of fact, we quickly found McDonald's to be our favorite breakfast stop and it was only slightly more expensive than here in the States.

After two days of double shots of All Japan Women and New Japan Men, we saw our fourth and fifth different promotions: JWP and FMW.

Japanese Women's Promotion is definitely second-rate when compared to the All-Japan Women, but who would not be? They are also the least popular group currently running, but managed to sell 90% of the seats of Korakuen Hall for their January date. This group was formed by some of the former AJWP girls who wanted to continue after their forced retirement, along with some who did not make the tryout cut. They wrestle sort of Japanese-American hybrid style of match that is usually slower than their All-Japan counterpart. The top star is far and away Devil Masami, a highly charismatic performer who has put on a lot weight since her All-Japan days. Other top attractions include Cuty Suzuki, Miss A, and Hailey Saito. They are also sponsored by Calorie Mate, a diet drink, and have its logo on everything, including warm-up jackets, programs, and souvenirs.

The FMW was next, and proved to be the hottest ticket in town. Even the standing room area was packed together.

Frontier Martial Arts Wrestling promotion, headed by Atsushi Onita, is the most diverse of all the promotions we saw. Among the performers on the card we attended were Korean karate stars, Russian Olympic Judo medalists, kick boxers, sambo wrestling grapplers, and female wrestlers. It was also the most violent promotion in terms of its product. The main events left virtually no chair upright in the whole arena after their bout. Lots of gimmicks and lots of blood bring out a very enthusiastic young crowd who truly get their money's worth. Top stars include Atsushi Onita, former All-Japan mid-card performer, along with Tarzan Coto, Sambo Asako, Mister Pogo, and Ricki Fuji.

The next day, Monday the 7th, the group traveled to Kisarayu by way of the Tokyo Bay ferry. Earlier in the day, Wally took us to a traditional Japanese cemetery where we saw the monument to Rikidozan, the most famous wrestling pioneer in Japanese history.

After arriving at the arena, we helped set up what seemed to be thousands of folding chairs, but was in reality about 800. This was for a New Japan men's spot show. The "arena" was actually three indoor tennis courts.

Our last show was the next day. We took out first Shinkansen ride, a bullet train, to the city of Nagoya. The trip took about two hours at the speed of 140 to 160 miles per hour. Because the rails are welded to produce a single continuous rail, it is hard to discern just how fast you are traveling. On the way, we passed by Mount Fuji, the tallest peak in Japan at 12,388 feet. Its almost perfectly symmetrical cone was an awe-inspiring sight. It is easy to see why its depiction represents the spirit of Japan.

After a big lunch at Denny's, we were on our way to Nagayo City to see the SWS.

The SWS is the newest promotion in Japan and is currently fighting to be taken seriously. After viewing them, it is easy to see why. In spite of an excellent souvenir program that stresses traditional Japanese values, the wrestling style is very similar to the WWF here in the United States. Restholds, obviously pulled punches, and kicks look very weak when compared to the other men's promotions. It does not help that the talent the WWF has sent over in a working agreement, with notable exceptions such as The Rockers, has been largely second-rate. Tenryu, the group's biggest star, got a million dollar signing bonus for jumping ship from All-Japan. Yet, despite the big money contracts, some feel this promotion will not last the year. Top stars include Genichiro Tenryu, George Takano, Naoki Sano, Kabuki, Yoshiaki Yatsu, and Kojo Kitao.

Well, one of the ways of looking at it was that the SWS acted as a reminder of what we were coming back to in the States.

On our last couple of days we tried to catch up on all the sight-seeing we had missed during the nine wrestling cards we saw in six days. We took our second long Shinkansen trip to the city of Kyoto, said to be the most beautiful in all of Japan. Well, it is not, but we did see many shrines, temples, and Nijo Castle.

Looking back on the trip now, almost two weeks after returning, it seems like it was all a dream. If I did not look around my room and see the Aja trash can and other souvenirs I brought back, I could almost convince myself I made it all up in my mind. But it did happen. The most wonderful and exotic vacation I ever had was shared with "The Tokyo Ten."

If you get a chance to go to Japan, do so! Wrestling, and life, will never be the same. ***

(LEGEND continued from page 27)

Then there was the night that the two masked men were about two blocks from one of the recreation centers driving through the neighborhood when we donned our hoods before we arrived, as was our custom. In all the years we wrestled as masked men, none of the fans ever saw our faces. As we turned onto a side street, suddenly there was a squad car behind us, lights flashing, one of the two officers yelling at us through a bull horn to "pull the car over." We did so and quickly removed the hoods. The policemen slowly got out of their squad car and approached our vehicle. One on each side with their hands on their guns. It was obvious if we flinched, sneezed, or scratched an inch, they would have blown us to smitheries. After explaining who we were and why we were driving through a business district with masks on in the heat of summer, the officers did a make on the car, let us proceed, and if you can believe this, said, "Next time you guys are in the neighborhood, call the precinct, we would love to watch your show." Gee, thanks guys. Two minutes earlier we would have been lying on the sidewalk with chalkmarks around us.

Super Slayer retired a few years back, but his legacy still lives. Rumor has it that he has changed his ways, gone on to bigger and somewhat better things, even hosting a television wrestling block in the Twin Cities area. But how can holding a microphone ever hold a candle to getting hit with cans, whipped with belts, and nearly blown to Mars by a couple of cops. ***

I'M BACK FROM JAPAN AND I CANNOT STOP BOWING

By: Mike Lano

BABY TALK, TOO!

The title above conveys what is lost in translating American English into Japanese and vice versa. The same can be said for trying to convey to Torch readers all the heart, spirit, and thought behind all the Japanese groups. Something is invariably lost and some things may not be transferred at all. "Baby talk, Too!" refers to the Japanese translation on their marquee for the movie, "Look Who's Talking, Too."

Steve Gerber's dream wrestling tour included Greg Regalado and Glenn Fox, without whom I would have never figured all the fighter's names backstage, along with Andy Dragos, Ken "Bushwacker #3" Taylor, Lennis Sargent, Bobby "I Love Takako Inoue" Steele Yates, and Dore & Michelle DeQuattro. We managed an extra press pass for the non-photographers to share and most of us went backstage at one time or another, except at AJPW cards. Mrs. Baba ran a tight ship and not knowing who we were on the first show we attended, she almost did not let us in. At the three NJPW cards, two All-Japan Women, one Japan Women's Promotion, one FMW, and one SWS shows, we had no problems with seats or press privileges.

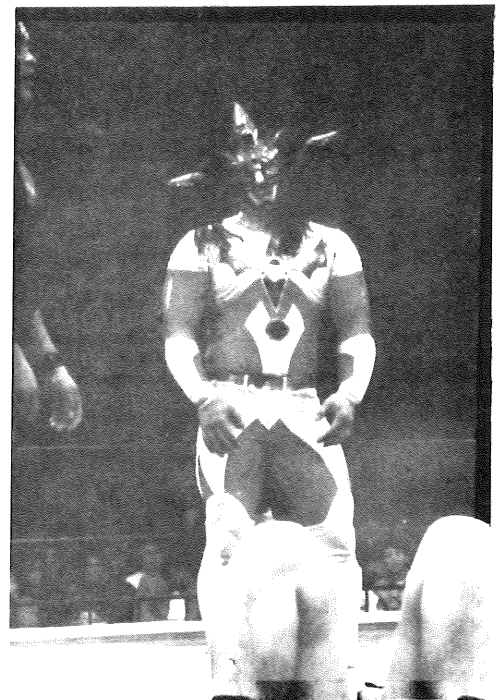
Funniest moments were keeping everyone together in Kyoto, where there was a lot of walking to temples and rock gardens; fitting into the tiny "wrestle" store that sells nothing but wrestling merchandise; Dore, Mike, and Greg along with the Vader mask; and me interviewing Riger.

As I spoke to Riger, actually pronounced "Lyger," a cockroach crawled across a Korakuen dressing room wall. Without missing a beat, Riger squashed it and kept right on talking as if nothing had occurred. When told of winning lots of Observer awards last year, he said, "So what I get?" When I told him he would also probably win many this year, he said the same thing, so I gave him an encrusted toothbrush and he laughed and laughed. This same emotional laugh provided the first tears for many of us. In his tag match, when things were going for his side, Riger looked up at the sky, or in this case the ceiling, and squealed with laughter as the crowd roared their approval. I guess he does this often, but it was like the last emotional Piper's Pit in '87 for me.

The men and women's groups do so many thing with style. To open the NJPW New Year's shows, all the wrestlers, plus Sakaguchi, came out in matching warm-up suits and saluted the crowd for its support. Sakaguchi and Hase told the crowd they would put on their best year and everyone would "try his best efforts." Then they threw out autographed colored plastic balls to the crowd. The same occurred at the ladies' shows. Many of us popped a tear and were in awe at seeing so many of our idols in the ring at once. This scene, plus my backstage observations at the workers bowing their heads collectively for many minutes meditating together for "good matches and best effort," got me to think to myself, "Hey, would WCW guys do this? Or would Sting and Sid help set up the ring, tear it down, sell programs and, sign autographs at every show, and then pray together for the best work they could produce?" Not in my lifetime. I am still in awe at how all the guys want the people to leave satisfied and happy. There was very little on the ego side. Inoki was not around at all, but at NJPW Sakaguchi made sure all the Americans, known as "guygeens" backstage got free iced teas. All bookers and workers were



HASHIMOTO & FUJINAMI & CHOSHU (By Lano)



JUSHIN RIGER (By Lano)

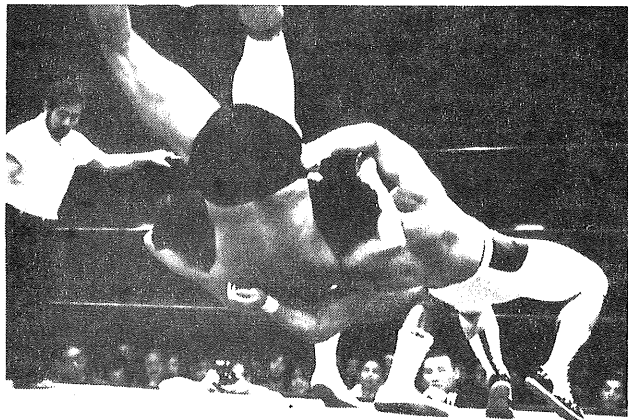
at all times interested in if we were enjoying the matches. They rarely had to ask; the look of nirvana was on all of our faces.

Another anecdote was watching Riger and the others work out hard for hours before even the spot show began. Riger and I stood behind curtains before his match began and he began chanting and holding his head against a post, meditating with no one around but me. Through an interpreter, Riger told me, "You must prepare spiritually, mentally, and physically for a match." He says that is why he is not very interested in coming to WCW. "They put on a circus show there," he continued. "At least in Austria and Britain, they try to have it look like sport like here in Japan." Riger allowed me to pester him with millions of posed shots with grace and dignity. Mutoh, Saitoh, Hase, Hashimoto, Chono, Bull Nakano, Devil Masami, Cutie Suzuki, the gorgeous Takako Inoue, The Jumping Bomb Angels, Bison Kimura, Aja Kong, and even Onita did the same. Mutoh especially loves to make funny faces. He has even made a movie where he is a jungle man, but it did not do too well. Mutoh said to tell Torch readers, "I have conquered Japanese movies. Now it is time to do the same in America with my pretty face." Giving presents is so big culturally, when I had Riger pose with some sheets, Mutoh grabbed them and said, "Present... for me?!"

Speaking of Riger who wears a mask, a country nicety is that anyone with a cold or flu wears a soft, white mask to minimize germs all day long, similar to what I wear when doing dentistry. They are also fastidious about alcohoholing off used telephones when they are sick to decrease transference. In the hotel alone, our free disposable toothbrush of good quality was always tossed and replaced with a sterile new one every day. Not even the Trump and Helmsley places do that for "guests."

We were able to hold one of Riger's mask and it is simply a slip on and stretch affair with the back completely open for his long hair to pop out. The eyes are screened off. We got pictures of him without the mask. Wally and Fume told us most Japanese know who he is, since he wrestled there before. But he is serious about no photos of him with the mask off. I took some when he was holding up the worked tag tourney \$1,000,000 yen check and laughing because it is so small. He worked out in Tokyo Bay without his mask, too.

Trying to comprehend the sophistication and angles in Japan is impossible with an American-bred mind. I have been fed circuits since 1968 and been brainwashed as everyone else has to the last decade of McMahon, Von Erich, and Crockett, featuring repeated angles, missed telegraphed moves, and the like. Little or no missed telegraphing takes place. In fact, those who miss a move are laughed at. Marc Laurinidas missed several accidentally and was booed and laughed at. We felt bad for him since he spent so much time with us. I think the difficulty for Americans to keep face with the far superior Japanese wrestlers move



DOUBLE SUPLEX (By Lano)

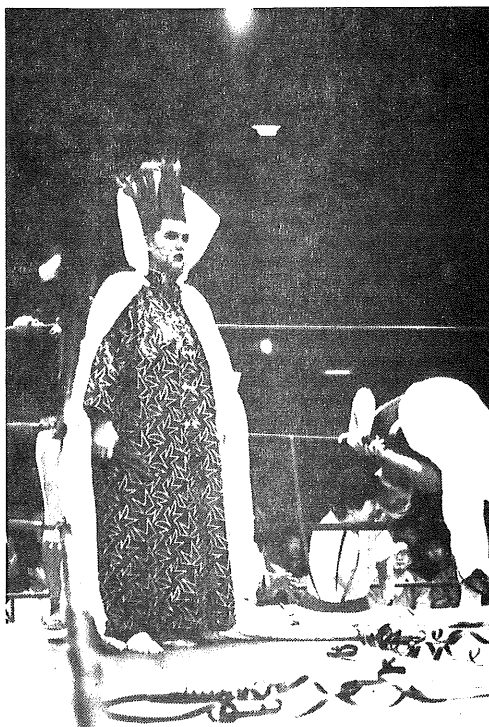
for move is akin to our difficulty to write about their differing product.

Much like the awkward Japanese t-shirts and stickers that loudly proclaim, "Let's Enjoy Trendy Life," meaning let us be yuppies, and "I Feel Coke," meaning I feel like having a Coke, is the impossibility of giving you Torchers 100% comprehension of how the promotions and matches function. I will probably continually use the following words to describe the wrestlers' attitudes toward the work and the final product we see in the ring: emotion, heart, fighting spirit, touching, tearful, and feeling. These operative key words summarize what the guys put into it and what the "marks," known as "oo-koo-guys," expect as ringwork. Fans who suspend belief are not the classic "marks," as we know. They are the most demanding wrestling fans and the most knowledgeable. They saw through Jim Hellwig in a heartbeat and dismissed him in seconds. They booed every SWS missed move and are not easily impressed by snakes, birds, steroid-built muscle guys, or the eighties McMahon version of what is wrestling. To date, every SWS show has needed papering of some sort and the March 30 Egg Dome show with Hogan & Tenryu vs. The Road Warriors is a make or break situation for the promotion for it to continue with Titan. Several talented guys are wasting their time in this "sell-out," heavily securitized effort that would be better for everyone if Titan were not involved. It appears Vince cannot stand the thought of WCW finally beginning to gel with a Japanese promotion without his presence felt as well. This is similar to the seventies with Baba aligned with the NWA and the AWA while Inoki was aligned with the NWF and later WWF.

AJPW, although one of Dave Meltzer's favorite promotions, still seems to be to be moving forward aimlessly, with far less talent than NJPW or the ladies' groups. Kikuchi, Taue, and Misawa are fantastic, but the talent is sparse in the American and other talent sections. AJPW also focuses more on legends and this "aura" thing. When Dave Meltzer and I first began corresponding in about 1971, I was always into the "aura" or famousness of various wrestlers. Some were not necessarily capable of having good matches, but either due to their longevity, amount of token titles held, mic work, or name recognition, these guys were my favorites in 1970 and 1971: Don Leo Jonathan, Bruno Sammartino, Verne Gagne, the Funks, Johnny Valentine, Bobo Brazil, Dick the Bruiser, The Sheik, and Pompero Ferpo.

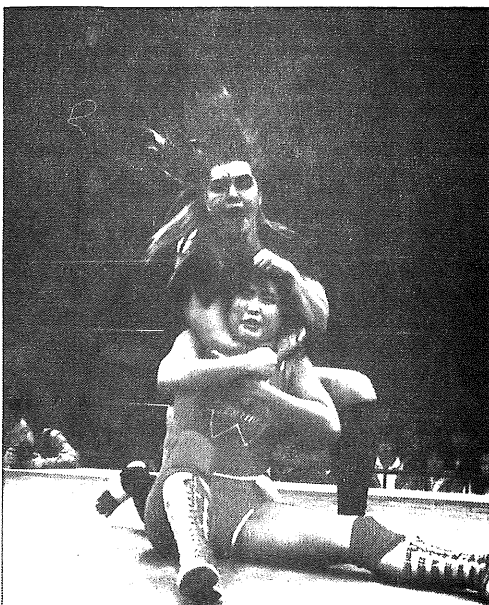
This is the aura thing that still exists within AJPW and its particular fan base. Bigger pops occur here for longtimers like Abby, Sheik, and others than for guys who work hard night after night like Misawa and Kikuchi. Old veteran and head worker, Tsuruta, is finally getting over big after only putting in nearly twenty years. Arguably, 1990 was his best year in match quality. All-Japan favors "the big heels," as Stan Hansen told us. Hansen and many Japanese reporters feel the reason Stan, Tsuruta, or Chosnu get bigger pops than Riger, Owen, Sano, or Benoit is Japanese fans are just into big guys, especially if they have that "aura." Perhaps that explains the misguided and intense desire to see what kind of pro wrestler Kojo Kitao, a former sumo wrestler, would make. Unfortunately he still needs help in SWS. At both AJPW and NJPW cards, many famous sumo guys were ringside, getting oohs and aahs from the crowd.

Abby summed it best, as I was getting kicked out of the AJPW dressing room, when he said, "Baby, things are tougher all the way around in All-Japan for press guys and everyone." But credit Baba with having the most integrity of any booker or promoter who ever lived. He has been a class act for better than the thirty years we recently celebrated with him.



(By Lano)

All-Japan Women, in contrast, are the hardest working group with the nicest front-office personnel next to JWP's Yuki Ueda. Promoter Mr. Ogawa and P.R. expert Fumi Saito make sure everything runs far better than the McMahon machine. The workers help set up the ring, take it down, set up the souvenir stands, sell the souvenirs to fans, take tickets, and wrestle. They do this a minimum of 300 times annually. No other group in Japan comes close to this amount of dates, some with double spots. After having my metal camera case used the first show by Abby and Kikuchi, I was honored to take my first Japanese bump during the second show by Bull Nakano. As mentioned, the toughest heels are often the nicest. This theory goes double for Aja Kong, Bison Kimura, and Bull Nakano. They put up with every pose I could think of and always laughed at my poor Japanese with girlish laughs. Japanese women still lag behind in importance to males, and this is why during the 1985-87 heyday of Chigusa and Dump, that this promotion appealed so greatly to young women; they finally had heroes of their own. Speaking of laughing, ladies are still

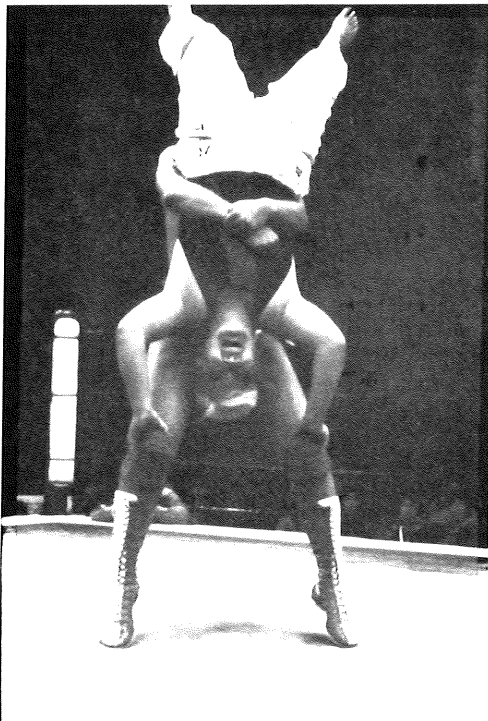


(By Lano)

expected to cover their mouth when they laugh or giggle. Men do not. And the Americans watched in disbelief while Japanese women hand-fed one by one, McDonalds french fries, to their boyfriends and husbands. This is normal behavior. There, men are to be pampered, and can be perceived as lazy by us. Things, culturally, seem to be slowly changing as more and more men attend the ladies' groups and the loudest cheers of "Go, Go Bison" begin to face competition from the men who cheer for the tough heels.

Speaking of ladies, Wally Yamaguchi's beautiful wife and best pal are training further in being wrestlers, having already worked England. Watch out for these, as Chris Benoit calls them, "Grounded Turtles."

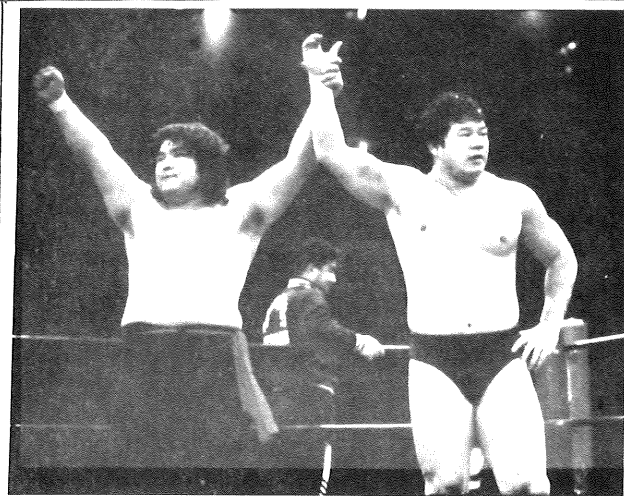
Now, how is this for civilized. At many of the shows, packaged sterile towels were given out to each fan to wipe their brow because of the hot television lights. As Meltzer has hit, there are still groups of female fans standing, chanting the name of their hero non-stop during the entire course of a match, crying every time something negative happens to their fave. I shot many photos of them and sometimes they hid their face, sometimes crying harder at the displaying emotion. There seems to be an unleashed volcano of emotion and feeling that Japanese fans have a difficult time letting go with. That was why seeing Riger do his chuckle to the heavens seemed so fulfilling to me. He has mastered the "work" for the gods Jim Hellwig seems to inept at, and does so beautifully.



(By Lano)

As Steve Gerber is sure to say in his accompanying article, the lady grapplers scream and yell at the top of their lungs, too. And all opening scrub bouts are shoots. Even the hair tossing appears to be a shoot as Bull had some of Hokuta's hair left in her hand after a toss. For sheer ability, flying moves, and quick display thereof, I have never seen better all-around workers than the All-Japan Women's group. They are breathtaking, juice like the guys, and take incredible bumps at which even Curt Hennig would grimace. Even with the big heels, congratulations for wins and acceptances occur most often in a forgiving atmosphere. This is similar to what the American fans could not understand when Piper shook Hennig's hand after Hennig pinned Piper clean. In Japan, it is a cultural norm I find thoroughly refreshing. As you know, there are no true heels or technicos in Japan, some like Bull and Vader just exhibit more outward toughness. Tsuruta comes closest to being a downright heel with his snarls and mocking of opponents.

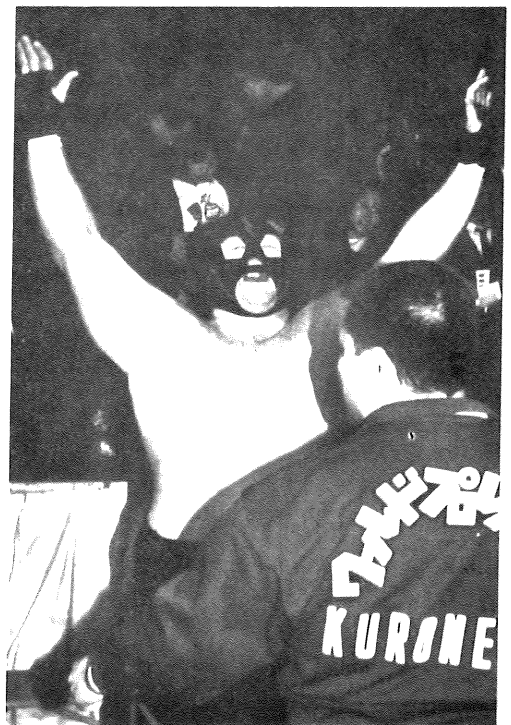
The other ladies group, JWP, works nearly as hard and they have beautiful outfits. I was upset that both All-Japan Women and JWP did not have 100% full houses for the workrate exhibited. But again, the big heavyweight guys are the draws. In almost every bookstore we visited, we found different picture books of JWP star Cutie Suzuki doing her modeling. She is gorgeous and has modeled in addition to wrestling. She and Keiji Mutoh are deemed Japan's Barbie and Ken by many; both are flawless. She takes some criticism from others by not being as tough, but we saw her take some incredible bumps knocking down a press



HASHIMOTO & FUJINAMI (By Lano)

table. The All-Japan Women stars who are forced to retire due to the young required retirement age come to JWP if they do not get into showbiz after age 26. The mischievous Devil Masami, best exemplifies this. She may be big, but she plays an incredibly tough and popular star here and can do shooting or comedy in a flash. Miss A was not as impressive in the lone match we saw her in, but gets incredible heat with banners and flags, proclaiming, "Get the Victory, Miss A." This group sent some workers to FMW before they established their own female stable. Collecting tickets and doing a million backstage jobs is Yuki Ueda, personable daughter of Umanisuki Ueda, AKA Prof. Hiro Ota of the LeBell Territory in 1976, former AJPW star. She could easily model as well, and I give her the Torch solute and plug her because of the help she gave us in translating all the names on the program. This is a blatant plug and Yuki, we love you!

This brings us to most everyone's favorite cavalcade of stars. More clucks for the buck, New-Japan Pro Wrestling. With champ, Tatsumi Fujinami, Choshu most likely successor, Jushin Thunder Riger, Hashimoto, Mutoh, Chono, Hase, Saitoh, the Blonds, SS Machine, Kido, Benoit, Owen, Vader, and many more, they are packed with talent. Japan's version of People magazine, with banners with Inoki's picture on every subway, proclaimed Inoki's election as one of the ten more monumental events last year. Sakaguchi may ghost-book for Inoki, but Inoki's presence is felt at every show. Again, watching all the NJPW guys meditate together in the dressing room, bowing their heads was a religious experience. I know I sound silly, but again, can you imagine a group like Dusty, Sting, Sid, and The Steiners laying their egos aside and praying for excellence and good



BIG VAN VADER (By Lano)

matches. I cannot. This phenomenal behavior occurs in life from day one. Inoki may have Rannels' ego appetite, but he seems to always succeed or pull himself from the clutches of defeat in grand style. Hopefully, Dusty came attempt some of this himself.

As I continue in this article to wax nostalgic and wish some of the Japanese niceties will someday rub off and be in evidence here, I will not apologize for sounding sentimental. These are the most perfect shows and if I can convey just a hint of what makes them so damn special, I will feel I have grasped some of Fumi's culture.

On that note, let us visit FMW. The show we saw was attended by an entirely different socio-economic group. Poorer, less well-dressed, and ready for blood and guts describes their crowds. On the event we attended, Onita did not wait until the end to cry over the house mic, but did it right at the start when all the stars entered the ring to salute the crowd and promise their best for the coming year. What could top Chris Benoit as NJPW's "Pegasus Kid" catching me on a dive breaking three ribs? Well, Lano the Ham created a gimmick and angle with third match female "heel" star battle by handing her a Keio Plaza Hotel can-opener which she then proceeded to use and hide from the ref and use again. The fans all laughed and asked who this crazy American photographer was.

Concerning the Onita-Gonzales incident, Onita and Mrs. Goto, Despina, graciously offered comments concerning the story that made headlines in Torch and Observer that week. They felt hurt that only the negative stuff was reported by Meltzer, although it cannot be denied the press came down hard and in a hurry on this all-time poor-taste angle.

Onita said, "Brody was loved and a legend in Japan. His obvious murderer without words admit that he did in the angle with me and would be the all-time most hated heel in a country usually without heels. What other angle could we use to pop a crowd and sell out the dome for this tiny group? We cause great emotion and yells and sellout for Korakuen better than All-Japan or New-Japan, but this was the only angle we could have come up with that would do monster business. But the bad feelings it created were not anticipated and not thought out well and we have so much potential we will try something else. I hear the Slaughter-Iraqi angle in the WWF is worse because it affects so many people and no one could stop McMahon if they wanted."

Onita cut the interview short, "To get myself truly psyched out before my tag match." If you thought Riger meditated, Onita got into it even more. He went from a cordial gent to a raving, brawling type infused with "fighting spirit" before my eyes in less than five minutes. While we were talking, he was very courteous and even posed with the Observer, which he knows brutalized him. What Onita lacks in true ability, he surely makes up for in brawling and ability to be believed as truly hurt. He is a marvelous athlete and actor. His tag main has to be seen to be believed and is a tape trader's dream. As with all the groups, most of the non-main workers come to ringside, aiding various sides, toweling or giving them drinking water, wiping them off, or handing them gimmicks as I did the lady FMWer.

It seemed like every chair in Korakuen was used by the guys as they fought for over twenty-five minutes in the stands and even using the crowd as a launch pad. When Onita won, people grabbed anything they could to get a souvenir sample of his blood on napkins, hankies, and clothes. It was like an "Atom and the Ants" punk concert as Onita was purposeless caught in the crowd being lovingly pushed and shoved and almost lifted onto the crowd's shoulders in a victory display.

Onita need not worry about using Gonzales to get over. He may almost be up there Maeda-wise with his own FMW legion of fans. They love this guy... and no crying after the match, except in the dressing room press area where he lay down screaming and saying how hard fought the match was. Lennis and I were rude boys, but managed to lay the Observer and Torch on his belly and snap pictures. Onita was a good sport and put up with all of it and was still blade bleeding in that tiny press room with about 45 photographers hovering for over fifteen minutes.

Despina was most kind in also echoing the Gonzales stuff, saying also her husband and Onita have worked hard together for over fifteen years, first with AJPW, literally giving pieces of themselves, as evidences by all the body scars on Tarzan; he's got Abby-Dusty-like scars on his head, arms, legs, and back. All this work put toward making FMW completely different and "more physical than any other group." The Onita tag brawl was wilder than anything I have seen in the States of Mexico and the fans were in a frenzy. The action truly scared Michelle DeQuatro. This group uses the legendary Wally Yamaguchi to run the P.R. and souvenirs and it truly is a fantastic, action-filled group. I think at times they try to be all-things for all fans, not unlike what Herd does at times. Involving Sambo, kick-boxing, boxing, etc. is fine. Having to bring in pussy-Russians who literally cry when kicked is fine, but NJPW did it better. Add the blood, brawling, and the ladies and you can be like the restaurant with fifty

pages. I would stick to the blood and the women, the things at which this group truly excels. Give them credit for trying and for putting the Gonzales thing aside quickly and professionally and then admitting their mistake.

We beat Dave Meltzer's record by seeing nine shows of six different groups in a six day period. It was then time for some culture discovery and sight-seeing. Moments after we checked into the Keio Plaza, where a lot of the wrestlers stay, I called up Stan Hansen's room. We were able to meet him. We also spotted a traditional hotel elevator lady with gloves blocking people from entering when it was full, then deep bowing as the doors shut, even though they could not see her anymore.

"Guygene" means "foreigner-hamagene" for white and "cocogene" for black foreigner; sorry for the spelling, Wally and Fume, who will be getting this yearbook. To get a favor, or to excuse yourself, or say you are sorry, try "go-men-ma-sigh" or "sue-me-ma-san." Bowing as you pass by people is respectful and it always hit me as an incongruity that such polite, quiet people can be cattle prodded and push and shove inside the subways at rush hour.

Our hotel was right near the world's busiest subway stop, "Shinjuku," where something like thirty-five million come and go daily. Little songs played on the Japanese harp to signal a train arrival or departure and seemed like a neat touch. Subways were spotless, with many colorful fashion ads and posters gaily displayed. Rapongi is where lonely Americans hang out, and is a westernized touristy area featuring the Karoki singing bars and Hard Rock Cafe. The Karoki bars were \$30 to \$35 for entry with no food or drink coupons.

It seemed odd as everyone sang Japanese songs, then American songs were only played during the intervals. We were surprised to see some homeless, where it is sinful to be without work; over 98% are employed. Folks here are kept down economy-wise and never expect to buy a house or car, so they indulge themselves on electronics, fashion, music, horse racing, and wrestling. We saw thousands in line waiting to place their bets. Ever more were found in open arenas watching their horses race right near Korakuen attacked to the new Egg Dome complex.

Hardest hip item to find was Tokyo Giants hats in any size but small. Their Giants are better known as the Yomiuri Giants, sponsor name. A simile here would be the Coca Cola (NY) Giants or Coors (Chicago) Bears. Sponsors help support wrestling and sumo big-time, and the Japanese knew this long before we had sponsors in the states or for the Olympics.

There is a chain of at least three pro wrestling merchandise stores, "Wrestle," in Tokyo alone. Wally Yamaguchi of "Maniax" has almost every tape, shirt, program, book, or toy you could ever want in a collection for sale. Non-wrestling department stores are magnificent, particularly Keio Store and Mitsukoshi Store. The bottom two floors sell nothing but fantastic food, including watermelons encased by walnut wood for \$75. \$18 baskets of perfect red strawberries, live squid, other live stuff, artful deserts such as one jelly thing that had colorful flowers suspended in it, beautiful and expensive kobe beef, and you name it. The next floor is all men's clothes, the next is all women's, the next is infants, next is furniture, next is kitchenware, all gorgeous showrooms. Totally unbelievable, in fact, and jammed with gawking people.

Ribera's Steakhouse is the best place to get full on steaks, because that is all they serve. The steaks are fantastic, and cooked right in front of you in a place that barely seats a dozen. Ribera literally has every star photographed at his place: Flair, Brody, Hogan, Owen, Baba, Hansen, Orndorff, and many others. Some hold up funny sayings in their photo and after ten years, the Freebirds still have the funniest 'dag gum' slogan: "We Still Rule Austin" or something like that. Ribera's was good, too: "Don't Take Shit From No One." Wally and Ribera were so nice, they did a BT and JZ and gave us Ribera watches free and tanks for 500 yen.

We never were able to hook up with Dump Matsumoto or Madusa Micelli who is still in Austria. Chigusa is doing great as she is in a daily soap opera where she plays a P.E. teacher. Dump is on a game show similar to "Let's Make A Deal" where if a contestant picks the wrong door, she comes out and pretends to beat the them. Chigusa's "Crush Gal" tag team partner, Lioness, is one of four who do ladies' commentary along with former fantastic vet, the beautiful Jaguar Okuta, who always wears formal gowns. We also forgot to go to Sayama's Super Tiger Gym, but the trade-off was me nagging the guys to take the three-and-a-half-hour trip on the bullet train to Kyoto which features many temples, Bonsai Gardens, and rock gardens. The bullet train goes from 120-160 miles an hour. We got off too early and had to wait another hour. While we waited, we saw and felt one go by at 160. It looks like a VCR in fast forward mode. Supposedly France has a faster one and the U.S. is going to get one someday.

After watching The Rockers use all those dives and the second turnbuckle Sano moonsaults, it appears we were not the only ones that Japan inspired. Sayonara, Torchers! ***

TOP TEN REASONS FOR JAPANESE SUPREMACY

By: Chris Zavisa

Every so often a reader writes an irate article to Dave Meltzer of the Wrestling Observer objecting to his coverage of the Japanese wrestling scene. Dave is singled out since his publication is the main source of Japanese news for Americans. The letter usually goes something like this:

"I am sick and tired of reading how great Japanese wrestlers are. Next time you go to Japan, why do you not just stay there? If American wrestling is so bad, why do you not stop watching it, stop writing about it, and change the name of your paper to the Japanese Wrestling Lover's Journal."

I have written this article for those who write such drivel or who may sympathize with it. Let us lay our cards on the table and get it out in the open for once. After you read this, you can call me a traitor, refer to me as Zavisa-san, send me nasty reminders every December 7th, or campaign for the revoking of my US citizenship. But here it is, you xenophobic myopics - Japanese professional wrestling is a far superior product compared to American professional wrestling. In fact, the Japanese are so much better, the contest is not even close. Let us put aside the flag, motherhood, apple pie, and that great paragon of American know-how Lee Iococa, and examine the reasons why.

1) IN JAPAN, THE EMPHASIS IS ON THE SPORTING AND ATHLETIC ASPECTS OF PRO WRESTLING: Pro wrestling is a calculated combination of athletics and entertainment. The proportion of each that you emphasize will provide a structure which in turn will largely influence and shape the look of your product. In the WWF, the largest and most successful promotion, the World Wrestling Federation, has opted to heavily emphasize entertainment over athletics. I would estimate that the WWF is a mix of about 80% entertainment and only 20% athletics. Ted Turner's WCW does a bit better with perhaps a 50-50 split. Although, late in 1990, WCW was neither entertainment nor athletics.

But look at the Japanese promotions. Akira Maeda's UWF is so anti-entertainment in its philosophy and structure that it has nearly eliminated all high spots. Its equation must be closer to 95-5 in favor of athletics over entertainment. All-Japan and New-Japan still have highspots and an occasional attempt at comedy, but the bulk of what we see is designed to appeal to hardcore, serious fans who want to see fast and stiff action. Their blend is about 80-85% athletics and 15-20% entertainment. It is important to emphasize that it is this very emphasis which dictates the structure of Japanese wrestling and from that flows the quality of the in-ring product.

Arn Anderson is fond of saying, "The name on the marquee says wrestling." To take that a step further, it does not say interviews, comedy, gay acts, steroid freaks, body builders, or magicians. I admit that I enjoy a good interview as much as the next guy. I look forward to Jim Cornette's witty lines. I even like angles such as when Eddie Gilbert and Jerry Lawler played destruction derby - and Lawler did it without a car on his end. But the bottom line is wrestling, namely the action in the ring. If that is what you crave, the Japanese structure their product to give you more of it than do the Americans.

2) BECAUSE OF THIS STRUCTURE, WRESTLING IN JAPAN IS TREATED AS A SPORT, NOT AS A JOKE. In Japan, results of the previous night's cards are carried in the newspaper and treated as serious sport. The wrestlers are honored and respected as physically gifted athletes. Selected wrestlers are placed in dignified television commercials, not as wrestlers, but as sports celebrities. One was even elected to the Japanese Parliament. Because of this coverage, the Japanese promotions cannot run the same match around the horn for five weeks. Matches cannot be repetitious or they risk exposing the business. America's most gifted wrestler is undoubtedly Ric Flair. But the dominant criticism of Flair's work is that he constantly works slight variations of the same match night after night. Because of its very structure, this cannot happen in Japan.

3) WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, JAPANESE WRESTLERS ARE NOT TYPECAST AS FACES OR HEELS. This allows a wide range of flexibility and freshness in the booking and matchmaking. It also means that a wrestler's actions in a match are not so programmed and predictable. In Japan, you can team with a wrestler on Monday, wrestle against him in the main event on Tuesday, rejoin him as a partner in a six-man bout on Thursday, and oppose him in another tag match on the weekend. Recently, on the opening night of the All-Japan Tag Team tournament partners Mitsuhiro Misawa and Toshiaki Kawada were placed in opposing teams for a special tag bout

honoring a late wrestler. They tore at each other with a fury and the next night were back together competing for the tournament trophy.

But here in the USA, most promoters look at wrestling fans as having the IQ of a street bum. It is thought that everything must be painted for us in very broad, black and white strokes. When on rare occasions, the US promoters do break this tradition, it is the exceptions and nobody is quite sure how to promote or handle it. Hogan against Warrior was a one shot bout. They may have done blockbuster arena business for two months afterward if only given the change, but such a pairing defied the traditional US booking patterns and was rejected as too confusing for the simple minded fans.

4) JAPANESE TV IS FAR SUPERIOR. In the States, we get well over 10 hours a week of the two major promotions. With the smaller promotions added in, many fans have access to nearly twenty hours of wrestling each week on television. Unfortunately, almost all of that 10 to 20 hours is instantly forgettable. If a tape collector gets one or two good bouts a week, they are indeed blessed. There has been plenty of weekends where I watched my ten hours of US wrestling and asked "why?" Almost all of the bouts are a uniquely American product: the squash match.

Contrast this to Japan where the two major promotions each have a single hour each week on television. In Japan, the term squash match has no meaning. Every bout shown is from an arena show and the big main events are routinely shown, usually in their entirety. No valuable TV time is wasted on repetitive interviews or cartoon characters masquerading as TV preachers or wizards. On most shows, there is always a bout that rates at least three stars. In fact, in Japan the biggest bouts on the most important cards, are always saved for TV where the most possible fans can see and appreciate them.

5) JAPANESE BOOKING HAS PLANNING, METHOD, AND PURPOSE PRODUCING CONTINUITY AND A SENSE OF DIRECTION. In America, the two major promotions are booked from opposite perspectives. The WWF is so obvious and deliberate in their direction that the old cliché about even Ray Charley can see what is coming usually applies. WCW, however, seems to be picked out of a hat. Characters are instantly created, then vanish overnight without explanation. Feuds are often created, then vanish overnight without explanation. Feuds are often aborted rather than finished and bookers are changed about as often as Michael Hayes washes his tights.

In Japan, booking is done very purposefully with a long term plan, both for the promotion and for the various wrestlers. Young, talented athletes are brought along slowly. They learn their craft, move up the ladder, gaining in ability and knowledge until several years later, they can work main events with credibility. New-Japan takes more risks, changes title belts more often, and does not have as rigid of a hierarchical structure. But its booking is very successful at attracting big crowds for their house shows and interest in both promotions is very high.

6) NON-JAPANESE WRESTLERS PERFORM AT A HIGHER LEVEL WHEN WORKING IN JAPAN. Lest anyone think that I am saying that Japanese wrestlers are naturally superior to non-Japanese, let us point out a few facts. There are many US, Canadian, and Mexican wrestlers with just as much ability as the best of the Japanese. Ric Flair, Terry Funk, Ricky Steamboat, Shawn Michaels, Owen Hart, Curt Hennig, Bobby Eaton, Negro Casas, and others are tremendously talented athletes who are among the hardest workers in the business. But it is the structure of non-Japanese wrestling, and the heavy emphasis on entertainment that holds them back.

When a talented foreign wrestler goes to Japan, they have to turn it up a notch or two. The emphasis is on athletics and they respond accordingly. Compare the performances of Van Vader, Stan Hansen, Terry Gordy, or Dan Spivey in Japanese rings to what they do in America. Hogan's best match in the last year was not the carefully overscripted WrestleMania bout against the Ultimate Warrior, but rather the old fashioned slugfest he had with Stan Hansen in the Tokyo Dome. Even the much maligned Mexican wrestlers changed their style in Japan and produced many good matches over their three 1990 tours.

7) THE BEST MATCHES ARE IN JAPAN. The proof of my case is not in the logic of argument, but rather in the actual wrestling product. I made up a list of the best Japanese and American bouts from 1990 to see how they compared. The

(SUPREMACY continued on page 53)

PORTLAND WRESTLING MEMORIES

By: Greg Anderson

Some people know Roddy Piper first gained regional fame in Portland, Oregon. Others know Jesse Ventura, Mad Dog Vachon, The Shepherders, Buddy Rose, Lonnie Mayne, and Jimmy Snuka have competed in Portland. But what did they do to set themselves apart from the others who never became well-known in wrestling? In the following article by Torch Weekly's Portland correspondent, Greg Oliver, he reminisces about growing up watching wrestling in Portland, Oregon, and recreates the incidents that made the above-mentioned wrestlers famous.

-Wade Keller

My first memories of Portland Wrestling were in 1966 and consisted of hearing the sound from my bed on Friday nights at 11:15. The duo of Bob MacAnulty and Barney Keep called the action as my father watched in the living room.

I did finally get to see an episode or two before Channel 6 cancelled the show after many years on the air. Don Owens was without TV for several months, but I was able to see current tapes from Hawaii and California and also films of bouts from the fifties. Finally, Channel 12 picked up the local show and aired the matches live from the Portland Armory on Friday nights. The new announcer was Frank Bonnema, who had helped in the beginning from wrestler Pepper Martin, who later went into acting and was seen in many small roles in TV shows of the 70's and was recently in a Coors commercial concerning literacy. Bonnema turned into a great announcer who, much like Marty O'Neill was described by Mr. Mike in the Torch Summer Annual III 1990, was the sanity amidst the chaos wrought by the wrestlers. He did not try to upstage anyone and let the grapplers be the stars. He was sorely missed when a heart attack took his life in late 1982.

Anyway, the TV show was an hour long and in black-and-white. When the Armory was demolished, Owen bought a bowling alley and converted it into a small arena for the house the matches. Owen named it The Portland Sports Arena, later to be nicknamed "The House of Action." Other changes in the show included a move to Saturday nights, lengthening the program to ninety minutes and adding color in 1972.

I saw many future superstars receive their first major push in Portland over the years. In the late 60's we had the team of Lonnie Mayne and "Tough" Tony Borne. They were the forerunners to the abusive coach/childlike protege angle as performed in later years by Kevin Sullivan and Rick Steiner in 1988. Mayne's "hobbies" included eating drinking-cup and goldfish and generally clowning around, which exasperated Borne. Tony's method of discipline included stern lectures and resounding slaps to the face. After Maybe pinned Gene Kiniski to win the NWA title, he went nuts and worked Kiniski over further and also decked the referee and Borne, too! The ref reversed the decision and returned the title to Kiniski. On TV the following Friday, Borne gave Mayne a tongue lashing and called him stupid. When Maybe replied his "Daddy," ex-wrestler Kenny Mayne, never called him that, Borne said, "Well, you're stupid and your father is stupid, too." Mayne then slugged Borne, bloodied him up and turned the announcer's table over on him. Their subsequent grudge match at the Memorial Coliseum drew a then-record crowd of around 8000. Borne then sent people like Mad Dog Vachon (see "Torch Talk" elsewhere in this Yearbook) and Stan Stasiak after his former charge.

In one angle, Vachon attacked Mayne during an interview, bloodied him up, and body slammed him into a coffin he had built earlier on TV. In their match, the action spilled out into the parking lot and they bounced each other's heads off the cars.

Borne and Mayne later reformed their team. After several months, they split up again after Borne slugged Lonnie's Dad on an interview when Kenny flew in to chastise Borne for mistreating his son and the elderly man juiced.

Lonnie went on to the WWF in 1972 to be managed by Captain Lou Albano and team up with Freddie Blassie and also achieved fame in Roy Shire's "Big Time" Bay area promotion and also in Los Angeles. He would return to Portland from time to time after hitting it big and the news of his death in 1978 hit longtime Northwest fans very hard.

Another future star to gain early main event experience in the area was Jimmy Snuka. Cowboy Frankie Lane introduced Snuka as his partner around 1971. Jimmy used the full-nelson as his finisher, like every other muscular grappler to be pushed in the territory. Later, Snuka and Dutch Savage teamed up to hold the Northwest tag belts on several occasions. Some of the memories I have of Snuka include vicious strap matches against Bull Ramos, slamming a giant plywood board on top of Ed Wiskoski in a TV brawl and a major faux pas when the show was still live.

Wiskoski and Buddy Rose "stole" the belts and threatened to take them to San Francisco. Snuka said, "You can go ahead and leave this goddamn place!" Savage had to come out later and apologize for his partner and said Snuka was really a good Christian who just got carried away.

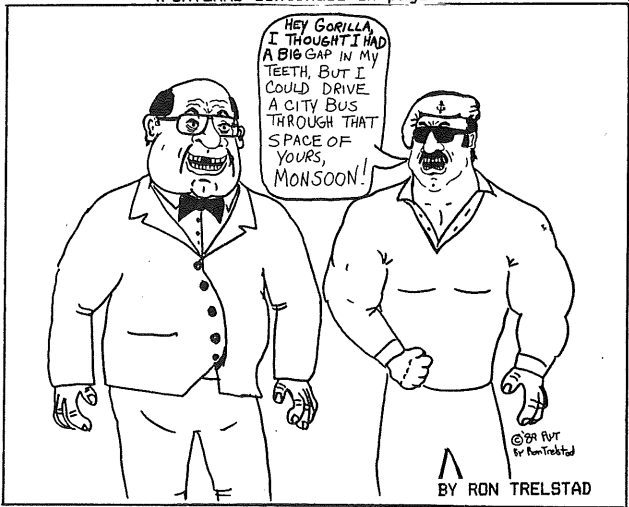
Years before becoming mayor of Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, Jesse Ventura hit Portland in the mid-70's. Bull Ramos introduced Ventura as his protege. Ventura, who came in after a stint as a jobber in Bob Geigel's Kansas City promotion. Also used the full-nelson and they had good program with Snuka and Savage. After several months, Buddy Rose - actually Paul Perschmann, another jobber who came to Portland for his first big push - entered the scene (see Mick Karch's article elsewhere in this Yearbook) and worked his way into the Ramos-Ventura act and tried to push Ramos out. Finally, he was successful in breaking them up, with Bull as the babyface. The break-up of Ventura and Rose much later was even more memorable. They lose the tag belts to Lonnie Mayne and Les Thornton when Rose accidentally "injured" Jesse's elbow when he came off the top rope with a knee and Maybe pulled his arm out of the way and Jesse's into it. Ventura left for six weeks - to Hawaii - and Rose finally announced that Jesse would be back in a week and he had gotten them a rematch against Thornton and Mayne for that night. When asked if he told Jesse about this, Rose replied that he had not even talked to him, but that everything would be okay.

The next week, Rose came out for an interview by himself and said he heard that Ventura was in the building and asked someone to send him out. After a few moments, Jesse showed up and said, "I'm back, Bonnema. I'm back to get revenge on one man and one many only. I'll bet you might think it's Lonnie Maybe. I'll bet you think it might be Les Thornton." Meanwhile, Rose was saying, "You tell 'em Jesse." Ventura continued, "Well, for all the people out there, I'm gonna let you know right now who I'm after." Jesse then suddenly slugged Rose. Then he pounded Buddy's head into the TV table and Rose bled. Ventura yelled, "I want you, Rose. You!" This was certainly one of the great moments in Portland Wrestling history. The feud had a very good run until Ventura left the Northwest for good.

My last subject for this article is the man who graduated from Portland to being one of the most influential in-ring performers on a national basis, the rowdy one himself, Roddy Piper. Piper entered the area in 1978 from California as a bagpipe playing, rapid-talking, arrogant heel. On his debut, Piper played the pipes and Don Owen looked genuinely disgusted with the sound of the instrument. I do not think Owen really cared for the gimmick. Little did anyone know at the time that Piper and Owen would eventually come to have great mutual respect for each other, a respect that transcended even the WWF and Vince McMahon Junior years later.

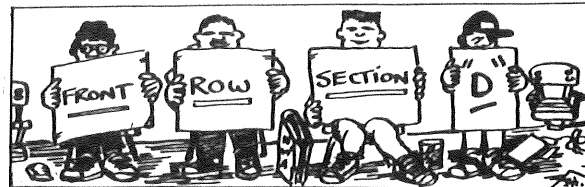
Anyway, Piper formed a tag team with Killer Tim Brooks, who at the time was a very good, tight worker. They became embroiled in a feud with the late Adrian Adonis and Ron Starr, who formed an exceptional highspot-oriented team. I recall that Piper mostly sold and bumped and offered little offense. The matches were quite good, however.

When Brooks and Piper sided with Rose and Ed Wiskoski for an eight-man tag match and after Brooks was pinned, Rose and Wiskoski began bad-mouthing him. When Piper came to his pal's defense, Buddy and Ed attacked both. They tossed Roddy out of the ring and then, as Rose held Brooks (PORTLAND continued on page 40)



A DECADE OF FRONT ROW STORIES

By: Bruce Mitchell
and
John Hitchcock



"Fans really crossed the line; it was bush league when they chanted 'Just Say No' at his (Steve Williams') matches." -Jim Ross, Torch Summer Annual III 1990.

"I'm not impressed by ringsiders that shout comments to upset or frustrate people doing their job. How about a confrontation after the matches? Now that I'd like to see." -Lloyd Lea, Reader Rhetoric, Torch Weekly 12/6/90.

"...reprobates... bums... cretins... creeps..." -Bill Kunkel, "Wrestling Potshots," Torch Weekly, 12/6/90.

"Sit down and shut-up!" -Too Many People to Count, Greensboro Coliseum, Every card.

"...And You Are There At Ringside!" -Caption to picture of Hitch and Mitch holding the "Jim Cornette Memorial Cup" sign, Pro Wrestling Illustrated, September 1988.

" -Gong Weekly #205, 5/19/90.

The Greensboro Coliseum has been a home for wrestling for its entire thirty year history, starting with a card in 1960 headlined by Antonio Rocca versus Bob Orton Sr. It has been the site of regular cards ever since, both big and small. The famous first Starrcade took place here, as did the first Clash of the Champions. Along with the old Charlotte Coliseum it was the home base for Jim Crockett Promotions and drew consistent crowds of 10,000 or more. In the last few years, as crowds have for the most part dwindled, fans on the front row have gained a small bit of notoriety for... well... bad behavior. The shrinking attendance may or may not be a coincidence. The most famous incident, both in the business and in the hardcore fan circle is the infamous, "We've Herd Enough" sign at the 1990 Wrestlewar PPV card. There is more to the front row than just bad manners, however.

This article is an overview of what pro wrestling in this building meant to a cross-section of fans who share one thing - no matter what, they always attend. If, after reading the followin stories, you look back on your own experiences at live rasslin' and think you did it before we did and better, my hat is off to you; because you must have had fun. Some of the people herein are devoted readers of the newsletters, some disdain them, and some have no idea they exist. All have been attending these cards for a number of years and are true blue wrestling fans, whether they it is completely "real" or not. In the tradition of Torch Summer Annuals, here are some of their "Most Memorable Moments."

MARIE BROWN: Affectionately known as "Grandma," she has been regularly attending cards in Greensboro since her father used to take her over fifty years ago. She is a permanent fixture on the front row and knows almost everybody: "I remember before they built the Coliseum that they used to hold cards on the roof of the old downtown YMCA. Johnny Weaver stands out because he always conducted himself as a gentleman. His team with George Becker was one of my favorites. Johnny Valentine's long feud with Wahoo McDaniel was a big thing. I will never forget when they sold out the place (16,000 seats) and turned away another 5000 people (for Rick Steamboat & Jay Youngblood vs. Sgt. Slaughter & Don Kernodle, March 12, 1983)."

JOHN HITCHCOCK: Hitch has a story about Grandma: "A few years ago a notorious nightclub in town, MC Square, decided to run a wrestling card in the middle of the week to make a few extra bucks. They used a very small-time, independent promotion consisting of a lot of would-be pros. The card was advertised as the "Return of the Missouri Mauler," who headlined in this area at least two decades ago. I was sitting in the stands early in the night when a wrestler came to the ring announced as the Mauler. Dyed black hair, pot belly, bulbous nose, and drunk. The only the part that resembled the real thing was his taped hands and his old age. I heard a voice and it was loud, "You're not the Missouri Mauler! I want my money back! The sign said the Missouri Mauler was going to be here! Where's Larry Hamilton? I know Larry Hamilton and you're not him. Admit it! What a rip-off! You got a lot of nerve, pal."

Grandma was going off on this poor guy, whose only comeback was, "Shut-up, old lady!" She verbally killed the jerk. Without a doubt, the highlight of the card. We found out later the guy had just gotten out of prison."

OBIN JOHNSON: His stream of consciousness heckling style and high voice make him a particular favorite: "One of the most memorable moments I ever had was when Ricky Morton was doing an interview for a television taping. Unfortunately, they chose to do it right in front of us and we were at our peak as loud-mouth heel fans. Morton was one of our arch-enemies. We blew his teeny-bopper ass out. 'Rick sucks! Boooooooo!' He got so mad he threw a chair across the floor. For some reason they used fake crowd noise when they ran the interview."

"I'll also never forget the night of the '\$100,000 Challenge Match' between Tully Blanchard and Dusty Rhodes, featuring the return of Magnum T.A. after his accident. No way Rhodes would lose this one, not with 'Maggie' in his corner, holding the money. We braced ourselves for a long night because the good guy fans were going to let us have it when the Dream won. Sure enough, right over us, Rhodes goes for the pin on Tully. Ref Tommy Young counts three and the crowd goes nuts. Then and only then does Blanchard put his foot on the rope. Tommy Young acts confused and looks down at the front row, who all have one foot on the ring barrier and are pointing at it, screaming, "Hey, Tommy, foot on the ropes!"

"J.J. Dillon, coincidently, picked this moment to swipe the money from poor old Magnum and run to the dressing room. Dusty takes off as fast as 400 pounds can after him. Young, looking at us the whole time, says 'Foot on the rope!' and pantomimes that the match should continue. We stand and count along with the ref. Dusty is counted out! Tully wins the money! The crowd is furious as we chant 'loser, loser' in sing-song voices when Rhodes comes back to the ring. He picks up the mic and starts swearing into it. All because we put our feet on the ring barrier. We did make up for it a little when a civic minded fan, with tears in his eyes, wanted to go backstage and security would not let him. 'But J.J. stole the money!' the guy burred. 'Yeah, go get him pal! Get that money!' we all shouted."

"The sickest main event I ever saw was Abdullah the Butcher and Jimmy Valiant versus Joe LeDuc, Sir Oliver Humperdink, and Paul Jones. Bloody and horrible. I also remember a manager's battle royal that was supposed to feature women. I spent the whole time yelling, 'Hey, Humpy! Where're the 'broads'?"

CHARLES D. HUNT: The poet laureate of the front row;



maybe you've read some in Jeff Mullins' Pro Wrestling Suchi: "October 11, 1986 I left a match between Flair and Jimmy Garvin and went outside where I met J.J. Dillon. We got to talking and he asked me to help him do something. Tully Blanchard had been hurt earlier in the night. I helped carry Tully to his car. They told me 'Thanks' and drove off. It was great to help one of my favorite wrestlers."

FRITZ GRONDY: One of the meanest teenagers I ever met: "One time I was watching an old fat lady with no teeth across the way yelling and screaming at some bad guy in the ring. She was sitting in a folding metal chair, really into it, waving her arms around and bouncing up and down."



BY JOHN HITCHCOCK

All of a sudden, "BOOM!" Her feet went flying in the air and the floor shook. Tremendous laughter. The lady stood up, dusted herself off, sat back down, and went back to giving the wrestlers hell."

DARREOL DICKENS & MIKE TERRY: Members of a group of fans who have their own gimmick: The Wrestling Shi'ite Moslems: June 6, 1987 - "The combination UWF/NWA card with the \$100,000 Dusty-Tully match, Freebird Michael Hayes and Terry Gordy versus UWF Champs Sting and Rick Steiner, Terry Taylor versus Chris Adams (his only appearance in Greensboro), Eddie Gilbert versus Kendall Windham, and in the main event Ric Flair & Lex Luger, the 'Dream Team,' destroyed and pinned The Rock & Roll Express. What a night!"

BUD GRUNDY: Bud's life was changed by the front row: "One night in Greensboro, Dick Murdoch wrestled some bum and basically kicked his teeth in. He had just turned on his old 'Outlaw' partner, Dusty Rhodes. The Coliseum had a new sound system installed and Dirty Dick decided to give it a try. After the match, he picked up the microphone and yelled, 'Rhodes, come out, you yellow dog!' He was pretty surprised when the front row went nuts and started chanting, 'Dusty's yellow!' He did a definite double-take at that and then did something to surprise us in return. He handed us the microphone! We all did the chant. Then Murdoch took the mic back and gave us the Cappy Dick salute. Later at the concession stand an old lady informs us that, for our information, 'Dusty is not yellow!!' Gee, after that, they changed the microphone rules."

"I also remember the night my all-time favorite wrestlers, The Road Warriors, made their debut in the Greensboro Coliseum. They were the AWA Tag Team Champions and it was title versus title against the NWA Champs, Dusty Rhodes and Manny Fernandez. They kicked their ass in a double DQ. What a rush! Then there's the Fabulous Moolah coming out and blowing kisses to the crowd. Also one night, after a tag match, the Brisco Brothers piledrove Jay Youngblood on the concrete floor. Every little girl in the place was crying her eyes out."

"Oh yeah, I also met my wife, Lisa, on the front row."

BOBBY YATES: "January 19, 1982 was a day I will never forget. It was an event I had long anticipated - my first chance at seeing my all-time favorites, The Fabulous Freebirds. I had seen them on television from Atlanta but never live. The match was Michael Hayes and Jimmy Valiant versus Terry Gordy and Austin Idol. The 'Birds are at their best when they are matched against each other. The funny thing was, there was not much cable in the Greensboro area so nobody knew who these guys were. I sure did. It was a great match."

"I also remember when Tully Blanchard was the U.S. Champion and was fighting Magnum one time. Baby Doll was at ringside holding the belt. In the process of interfering in the match, she dropped it and the plates went all over the floor. She spent the rest of the match trying to put the plates back on."

K.C. O'Connor: Look ma', Sid Vicious spit on me! "After Nikita Koloff clotheslined David Crockett on TV, I just had to go to wrestling. Ric Flair and Koloff had a double DQ bloodbath. Flair juiced all over the place. After the match, I reached over the rail and dipped my ticket in a pool of his blood left on the floor. I still have my souvenir."

TODD STUTTS: "The greatest night of wrestling I ever attended was one a lot of people are familiar with: the first Starrcade. A complete sellout and a turnaway crowd beating down the door insured that the joint was rockin'. The highlight for me was the greatest tag team match I have ever seen, The Briscos versus Ricky Steamboat and Jay Youngblood. There was magic in the air that night. I hope it comes back. Also, one match, I forgot the participants, where Tommy Young did his trademark basepath slide to count three, slid too far, fell out of the ring, and busted his ass."

"This was not in Greensboro, but we went to the Superdome for the first Crockett Cup. After watching the matches in the empty arena, we saw Jim Crockett in the elevator. We asked him if the Cup turned out like he expected. 'No,' was all he said and he rolled his eyes heavenward."

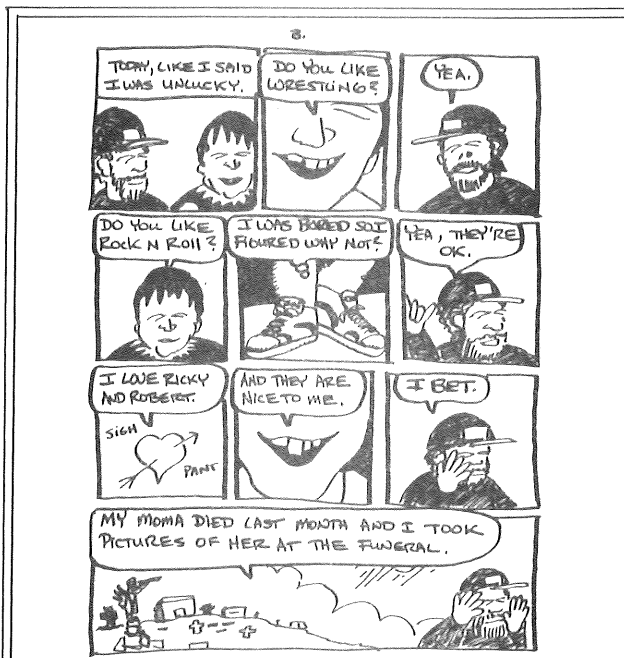
ANGIE CLINE: Angie's secret ambition in life is to be a valet for wrestlers: "One time I was hanging around outside the exit for the good guys when Lex Luger and Hawk of the Road Warriors came running out. They had missed their cab and needed a ride quick. I ran and got my car, which was full of laundry. I threw the laundry out into the parking lot and drove them to the airport as fast as my car would go. We got there ahead of the cab. I never did go back and get my clothes from the parking lot. Lex is my favorite, just ahead of Ricky Morton."

"Also, one time Michael Hayes called me a heifer. I am not! Then there was the time that Abdullah the Butcher was fighting out into the crowd, slipped and almost fell on me! Yuuuck!"

BRUCE MITCHELL: Earlier in the week, we had been to a card in Raleigh at the Dorton Arena. One of the main events was The Midnight Express versus The Fantastics with all the members of the losing team getting ten straps from a leather belt. Great match. Great ending. As it happened, the same match was signed for this card in Greensboro.

We were in one of our primes as heel fans. We rooted for every bad guy as loudly and forcefully as possible. Not everyone cared for it. This night a big guy, about fifty years old and three hundred pounds, decided he would take care of the situation, once and for all. His salt and pepper beard made him look like a mean version of Mr. French from "Family Affair." He seemed like a man who was used to getting his way. He started on us from the opening match. He came up to the front row and glowered "Down in front! Shut the hell up!"





He was an intimidating bully, so we all paused about half a second before lighting into him: "Siddown old man! Who the hell do you think you're talking to? We own Greensboro! Don't tell us you root for the losers!"

"Losers? They are not losers! Horsemen and them are nothin' but cheaters!"

"Cheaters? Whose got the belts, old man? Horsemen are YOUR champions!" We were big fans of Gorgeous Gino Hernandez. The man went read-faced back to his seat. Obviously neither side was going to back down.

A little later, Dusty came out for a match with Nikita Koloff against Tully Blanchard and Barry Windham. Arn jumped him before it started, so Rhodes went back to the dressing room and put a bloody bandage around his fat head. This match was vintage Rhodes ego-tripping. Everybody played sellball for him the whole match and, of course, he got the pin. Then the heels beat the crap out of him and he was stretchered out. Not only did he get to play Superman, but also the Christ-like martyr.

The big guy loved it: "Who's the losers now? Dusty's the man! Horsemen suck! Dusty's the winner!"

"Winner? He doesn't look like a winner to me, old man! Looks like they're taking out the trash."

The old man was not going to give up easily. He swore at us and went back to his seat. He knew he would get his chance to shut us up. After all, right was on his side.

Next match was the aforementioned Midnight Express rematch. After showing James E. the night's signs, making the X with our fingers, and saying hello to Tommy and Bobby who had a great sense of humor, we sat back down to enjoy what promised to be a great match. It was. And The Fantastics got the pin. They prepared to send The Express to the proverbial woodshed.

The big jerk was euphoric. Now he had us, "The Midnight Express lost the match! Ten lashes with the strap! Ten! Whip 'em, whip 'em like dogs!"

"I don't see anybody getting whipped YET, old man!" One second later, as if on cue, the infamous racket goes flying in the ring. Whaa! Express get the leather straps and the tables are turned. Let us all count the whips on The Fantastics' backs. One, two, three... I thought the old man was going to have a heart attack. His whole head turned a bright scarlet and he started kicking the empty folding chairs. He was raging incoherently and frothing at the mouth. Another time that going to Dorton Arena paid off. Forget smart fans, I love the marks.

EDDIE BEESON: Eddie is the spiritual anchor of the front row: "One of the first times the WWF came to town, we had our normal seats and were watching the action. This match was the typical Bore the Fans before the Hulkster match. Suddenly walking to the ring appears Terry Gibbs, one of Titan's best jobbers. We automatically figure this match for a squash. Then out comes Jerry Allen. Jerry Allen! I realized then it was going to be terrible. John goes nuts because this match was so late in the card. John lights Terry Gibbs up. 'Gibbs, where's your t-shirt? I know you're going to lose because you don't have a t-shirt. You're going to have to do the job for Terry Allen!'

"Terry Gibbs responded, 'If you think you're so bad, get in the ring asshole!' He threw Jerry out of the ring. 'You like him so much, you can have him.' Then he jumped out of the ring and slammed Allen on the floor. 'This is your chance to be a star, fat boy! Get up and get you some!'

"John replied, 'I don't wrestle for free, like you. Get Garea out of the back and I'll sign a contract, but first you're going to have to beat this bum. I don't wrestle losers, loser.'"

"Gibbs got back in the ring and grabbed Dave Hebner. 'This old man could whip your ass!' Hebner looked shocked.

"Hebner probably could whip my ass 'cause I know he could whip yours. Leave the ref alone.' Gibbs held the ropes open and was yelling at John when another fan started yelling at him. Gibbs replied, 'Shut-up, asshole! I'm yelling at this other asshole.' The crowd was laughing and having a good time. As Gibbs continued to yell at John, Jerry Allen came up from behind and pinned him with a school boy cradle. The crowd exploded. Hebner ran down to the front row and raised Hitch's arm in victory.

"The next match Hebner came back and told us, 'Gibbs said he had a great time. Let's do it again real soon.'"

JOHN HITCHCOCK: "Jim Cornette was always a favorite and we wanted to do something special for the first Clash. We spelled his name with posters across the front row: C O R N E T T E. We started chanting 'Cornette Rules' during the commercial and Jim shushed us. 'I'll cue you when to start back.' That's how we got in on the intro of a historic match.

"The first time the heel fans became a real force in Greensboro we were sitting about eight rows up with around nine guys. For the first time we prepared for the show. We spent four and a half hours making signs. Tonight was the night we made being a fan a performance art, two weeks before they ran the famous angle where The Horsemen - Flair, Blanchard, and Anderson - ground Ricky Morton's face into the concrete and broke his nose. He came out on TV the next week with both eyes blackened and white tape on his nose. He said that he was going to wrestle against doctor's orders because The Horsemen could not kill rock & roll. The main event that night was Flair and Blanchard versus Ricky and Robert.

"That night we all came with white tape across the bridge of our nose. This was Billy Pritchard's idea. At the first intermission, about 150 people came over wanting to know whether we were supporting little Ricky or were against him. We blew them all out. When one guy ran out of breath, another took over. People went nuts, screaming and throwing things at us.

"Later in the night another intermission and another mob scene. The wrestlers came out of the dressing room to see what was going on. The people were really mad at us. We were just repeating the classic lines you heard from heels. 'To be the man, you gotta beat the man! If they cheated, the refs would disqualify them. It's Ricky's fault. If you get in bed with the Big Dogs, prepare to get bit.' A friend of mine came down from the press box and asked me if I knew what we were doing. I said, 'Yeah, we're raising hell!' He grabbed me by the shoulder and said, 'Would you just look around?' I saw about 450 furious people all around me. Believe it or not, the police came over in case of riot.

"Finally, the main event started. We figured we were dead men, but we would go out loud and proud because singles wrestlers never beat tag teams wrestlers in a tag match. Flair, Blanchard, and J.J. Dillon went into the ring first. All at once we held up our signs that read 'H O R S E M E N!' The heels read our signs and started clapping, then laughed when they saw tape on our noses.





This was the first time heels ever acknowledged their fans. Suddenly the deafening rock & roll theme blared. As soon as Ricky and Robert hit the ring, we flipped the signs to spell out 'R O M P E R R O O M.' Blanchard saw the signs first and laughed so hard he collapsed on the second ring rope holding his stomach. J.J. was on the floor, turned around, saw the signs, and screamed, "That's fucking great!" He jumped into the ring and got Flair's attention. Flair started laughing, did his signature walk, leaned over and pointed to us. We broke out into chants of 'Broken nose! Broken nose!' to the tune of 'Rock & Roll! Rock & Roll!' The Express were too shocked to say anything. They had never seen anything like it. To make the evening complete after a good match, Tully held a chair on the second turnbuckle and Ric grabbed Morton by the seat of his pants and ran him headfirst into the chair for the three count. They left with the 'Horsemen Rule!' chant ringing in their ears.

"There are a lot of great moments. The night New Breed's Chris Champion leaped from the top ring rope fifteen feet out onto the concrete smashing his opponent, turned and then led us in the singing of 'Fight For Your Right To Party!' The Crockett Cup when Nikita and I went nose to nose. 'I suck! You Suck!' I thought Jeff Bowdren was going to wet his pants. I almost did. The time we gave Stan Lane's mom a dozen roses and her gracious response was memorable."



FINAL WORDS FROM BRUCE: A lot of people have made 'rasslin' at the Greensboro Coliseum memorable over the years. Klondike Bill has been there forever, as was Wally Dusek, the timekeeper. Dr. Tom Miller, ring announcer, was a legend in his time. The Tonys, Schiavone and Gilliam, are always fun guys. Gilliam is almost an unofficial member of the front row. He has a good sense of humor that never interferes with his job. Keep tearing up those obscene signs, Tony. Chip Berman is pretty cool, too. Hey, Debbi! C'mon, take our pictures! This photographer is still nice to us, for some reason. You never forget surrealistic True brothers, Jack and Roger, who are going to form a country band as soon as they learn how to play their instruments. How about Cowboy Chris and his valet, who are going to break in the biz any second now, or so they say? Or Christopher Love's sister who is trying to publish a book on wrestlers and claimed she gave The Nature Boy his signature line of 'Diamonds Are Forever.' And you

thought it was Ian Fleming. Precious, but not Garvin's, and her mom chasing after The Southern Boys. Sorry ladies, does not look like Magnum's coming back. Cannot forget Colson, who works the independents and went to Chris Adams' school and yet somehow is still a mark. And how about Donny, 'That's Daniel!' who thought The Black Scorpion might be Big John Studd? 'You haven't seen him lately, have you?' Good point, Donny. We should acknowledge all the security who keep us safe. Of course, we repay them by tattling on jerks who throw stuff in the ring. The greatest part has been watching all the wrestlers. All have been great in their own way. Bobby Eaton has been incredible to watch over the years. Arn Anderson is always our favorite. And the Greensboro Coliseum will forever be the House the Nature Boy Built.

The Greensboro Coliseum is older now and showing the strain. Because of age and competition, it does not draw the same calibre of concerts and shows that it did in the past. The Atlantic Coast Conference Basketball tournament, a perennial highlight, has moved to greener, and newer, pastures. The old building has been underfunded in recent years and it is not the same as the good old days. Now, with a referendum passed, it has new money and another chance. If the Coliseum can have hope for a renaissance, why cannot professional wrestling? ***

(PORTLAND continued from page 36)

over his knee, Wiskoski came off the top with a series of diving headbutts to "injure" Brooks's back. Piper was left to defend their honor and the feud eventually centered around Piper and Rose. This was the last great long-range feud to be played out in Owen-land; apologies extended to Rip Oliver and Billy Jack Haynes. The singles feud really took off during a match between Rose and Adonis that Piper refereed. After Rose won the loser-leaves-town match. Rose stuck a foreign object into Piper's eye for an injury angle and by the time Piper returned, Rose formed "the Army" with Shepherders Butch Miller and Like Williams and Rose refused to face Roddy one-on-one.

One night, as Piper and Stan Stasiak were facing the Sheeps in the ring, Rose came out and stole Piper's kilt from ringside. Then he took it up to the TV booth, tore it in half, and set the material on fire. Piper saw this and left his partner to get beaten by the Sheeps while he attempted to smother the flames. In a humorous twist, part of a no-smoking sign was burned up in the blaze. Rose finally was forced to meet Piper in a singles match and a series of bouts resulted and drew, what was for this area, large crowds.

Rose was involved in a series of hair vs. hair matches and defeated Red Bastein, Steve Pardee, and King Parsons in these bouts. Eventually, Rose wanted to get Piper in one and Roddy refused. After the Sheeps and Rose attacked Piper and Luke snipped off some of Piper's hair, Roddy challenged Luke to a hair match. In a wild match, Piper beat Luke and he was shaved bald. Later, during a tag match between Piper and Rick Martel and The Shepherders, Rose interfered holding a pair of scissors and tried to cut Roddy's hair again, but Piper got the scissors and snipped some of Butch's hair. This set up a hair match between Piper and Butch with both Rose and Martel as referees. Piper won that one, too. Roddy then decided to accept Rose's challenge, but Rose backed off. Owen produced an open contract that Rose had signed and forced him to accept a hair match against Piper. After a hype job that would make Vince envious, the bout was set for the Portland Expo Center to house the larger crowd that was expected. Red Bastein came in to ref the match and Rose put his Lincoln Continental on the line. Also, the bout would be held in a cage. In the match, Rose delivered one over-the-knee backbreaker and attempted another one when Piper rolled him up into a small package for the pin.

Rose started wearing a mask with a wig sewn into it to hide his shaved head and it became the goal of the faces, mainly Piper and Martel, to take off the hood. Finally, one night, Rose was on an interview and said that if anyone could take the mask off of him, he would keep it off. Immediately, Piper snuck up and put a sleeper hold on Rose and yanked the mask off. Eventually, a loser-leave-town match was set up between them. The bout, which I attended, had tremendous heat and was a classic. It built and built and at one point, both men collided. Then Dutch Savage came out with a bucket of water which he poured all over both combatants to revive them. The match ended in a sixty minute draw. In the rematch, which I did not get to see, Rose pinned Piper to end Piper's full-time activity in the area. He went on to the Mid-Atlantic area and the rest, as they say, is history.

I would like to close with one memorable quote from Piper. Roddy talked about how he was involved with the environmental group, Greenpeace, and he was appalled at how seals were being skinned alive to make fur coats. Rose had earlier been bragging about how he bought his girlfriends seal-skinned coats. Piper went on a tirade about this and concluded, "Of course, I've seen Buddy Rose in the shower, and maybe he should buy his women furs!" ***

VIDEO TAPE ESSENTIALS

TEN MUSTS IN BUILDING A WRESTLING LIBRARY

By: Steve Gerber

Ah, the joys of owning a VCR! For the wrestling fan, it enables us to view promotions and stars we have only read about and dreamed of one day seeing in person. But there are literally dozens of professionally released tapes and hundreds available through the tape trading market often noted in various wrestling periodicals. Then which ones, you may ask, are really essential ingredients in building a well-rounded collection? It is to that end that this article is written. The ten tapes listed are among the best of the best that I have seen. They showcase different promotions, different eras, and different styles. With these tapes, you the collector will be on your way to having a better understanding of wrestling's history, and hopefully a greater appreciation of what the sport has to offer. In no particular order...

1) "WAR GAMES: GREAT AMERICAN BASH '87" (Tuner Home Entertainment - \$30) Includes War Games 1 & 2; Rick Steiner vs. Barry Windham; Nikita Koloff vs. Lex Luger; Steve Williams vs. Dick Murdoch; Freebirds vs. Manny Fernandez; Ivan Koloff vs. Paul Jones; Dusty Rhodes vs. Tully Blanchard; Ric Flair vs. Jimmy Garvin; and Rock & Roll Express vs. Midnight Express. Acts as a good overview of prime NWA action during one of their heydays. The tape showcases some of the most talented and hardest-working wrestlers, while also presenting some innovative gimmick matches.

2) "THE GOLDEN ERA OF WRESTLING - VOLUMES 1 & 2" (International Video Entertainment Inc. - \$20 each) Includes complete two out of three fall matches from the 1950's and early 1960's. Volume Two is the best of the two efforts and features Gorgeous George vs. Jesse James; Antonio Rocca vs. Hans Schmidt with Joe Louis as ref; and The Fabulous Kangaroos vs. Moose Cholak & The Mighty Atlas (heel vs. heel). These two tapes are probably the best in the nostalgia genre and are unique in that the matches are complete, rather than highlights as is the case on many other video offerings.

3) "WRESTLING QUEEN" (Active Home Video - \$60) Tape chronicles the entrance of Vivian Vachon into the mat game, while frequent side excursions showing the exploits of her brothers, Mad Dog Vachon and Paul the Butcher Vachon, and other famous grapplers of the seventies. Video is done in documentary style, but treats viewers as "marks." Also, the video quality is highly variable, with some of the matches shown barely discernible, but overall, the movie is quite entertaining. Features Andre the Giant, Killer Kowalski, Blackjack Mulligan, Nick Bockwinkel, Bill Watts, and a very young Jimmy Garvin.

4) "GREATEST SPORTS LEGENDS - BRUNO SAMMARTINO" (Sports Legends Video - \$10) Episode from the "Greatest Sports Legends" TV series from the 1970's. Host Tom Seaver interviews Bruno who reminisces about his childhood and his legendary ring career. Again, Bruno treats the viewers as marks, and attempts to lend credibility to professional wrestling. The half-hour show is produced in an interesting and low-key style. Features highlights of Bruno's bouts with Stan Hansen, Gorilla Monsoon, The Sheik, Ernie Ladd, Killer Kowalski, and still pictures of his title win over Buddy Rogers.

5) "A DAY IN THE LIFE OF NORD THE BARBARIAN" (Nord Motor Company - \$23) One of the funniest in wrestling videos ever made. Twenty minutes of pure, unadulterated, slapstick comedy. Purports to show a "typical day" in the life of this Bruiser Brody clone through a series of short vignettes. Features the infamous commercials Nord made for his family's car dealership in the Twin Cities of Minnesota including him slamming prospective customers through windshields by means of suplexes, powerslams, and piledrivers. When the tape was released, it was sold at convenience stores across Minnesota.

6) "THE ROAD WARRIORS - ROAD TO THE CHAMPIONSHIP" (Kids Classics - \$15) Features Roadies vs. Baron Von Raschke & Curt Hennig and Roadies vs. Larry & Curt Hennig. Tape proves that the AWA did have some genuine talent and belonged in the "big three" promotions through the early to mid-eighties. Also shows that Warriors used to their greatest capacity as hated heels who had a "We Don't Care!" attitude. Too bad both the promotion and the performers, with Hennig obviously an exception, can now only look back on former glories.

7) "WRESTLING GOLD VOLUMES 1-4" (Kit Parker Films - \$15 each) Features 60 minutes of Memphis area wrestling on each tape. Most matches are shown in their entirety and

there are six to eight matches per tape. No tape library on wrestling would be complete without some Memphis area classics. These tapes fulfill that need. Video and audio quality are very good. Volume 1 features Jerry Lawler vs. Hulk Hogan and Road Warriors vs. Lawler & Austin Idol among five other bouts and is the probably the "must-have" of the bunch.

8) "LUCHE LIBRE - EL HIJO DEL SANTO VS. NEGRO CASAS" (ask collector or video distributor for address, \$40) Features El Hijo del Santo vs. Negro Casas from the Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles on July 18, 1987. This gets my vote as the best wrestling match of all-time and is done in the lucha libre style and is two out of three falls. Lots of high flying acrobatics and solid matwork. El Hijo del Santo is the son of the legendary Santo, the most popular grappler in Mexican history, and Casas may be one of the best heel luchadors ever. Match pits Santos' mask against Casas' hair and went the full three falls. This is a "must see."

9) "THE UWF - TAKADA VS. BACKLUND" This is our "black market" offering for our video library and is easily obtainable through trading sources. What makes this tape special is its presentation of professional wrestling itself. The UWF's aim from its very inception was to present a legitimate-appearing style that was free from the highspots and glitz apparent in all other promotions. We all know how well they have succeeded in both their intentions and the box office. This particular bout from the 12/22/88 card in Osaka, Japan pits one of the most respected American wrestlers in Japan, former WWF World Champion Bob Backlund vs. then UWF Champion Nobuhiko Takada. What follows is almost twenty-six minutes of fearlessly executed mat-style wrestling. Show this match to kayfabe' your disbelieving friends the next time they tell you all pro wrestling is "fake."

10) "DREAMS COME TRUE IN JAPAN" (ask for details) This is a documentary on Madusa Micelli done for Japanese TV and is beyond a doubt the best feature on a wrestling personality ever made. This runs 22 minutes and features an ultimate confrontation between Madusa and Dump Matsumoto protegee, Aja Kong, in a shoot boxing match. Also includes footage of the Japanese women working out in their gym. Get this tape. ***

[Steve Gerber of El Toro, California has been reviewing wrestling video tapes on a monthly basis for Pro Wrestling Torch since the March 10, 1988 issue and will continue every month to keep readers informed on all new commercial releases of pro wrestling video tapes along with hard-to-find alternative tapes with honest reviews and editorial comments on the pages of Torch Weekly.]



BY BILL KUNKEL

TORCH TALK



ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN HITCHCOCK

JIM CORNETTE

By: Wade Keller

Jim Cornette, second place finisher in Pro Wrestling Torch's Eighties Decawards, is one of the most entertaining personalities in wrestling today. He was a huge fan of wrestling while he was young, began to shoot photographs for Jerry Jarrett's Tennessee promotion, and one day was asked to be a manager. He said "yes," and the rest is history.

Besides time in Tennessee, Texas, Oklahoma, and Alabama, Cornette has spent the majority of his nine year career working for the National Wrestling Alliance. For years, his interviews on the Saturday "World Championship Wrestling" show and his commentary during his tag team's matches were the highlights of the two hour shows. He left the NWA, now called World Championship Wrestling, at the end of October last year. Along with his departure came eleven pages worth of stories from his experiences working for World Championship Wrestling.

The following eleven pages are Jim Cornette's version of the time he worked for TBS. This "Torch Talk" interview, conducted via telephone in December of 1990 and January of 1991, covers the time between the TBS buy-out of Jim Crockett Promotions to the days before Jim Cornette was walked out of WCW. Jim Cornette's account of the day he was fired and the circumstances surrounding it was published in issue 100 of Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly. Limited copies of issue 100 containing the two page interview with Cornette remain available. Part One was published in issue 98 which details Cornette as a young fan and his evolution into the wrestling industry.

The following is part three of a continuing series of interviews with Jim Cornette which will be running in future editions of the newsletter, Pro Wrestling Torch Weekly. Keep in mind while reading this, all quotes by Cornette of what others said are paraphrased from Jim Cornette's memory.

So kick back and be prepared to enter the corporate world of professional wrestling from the eyes of Jim Cornette...

WADE KELLER: LET'S BEGIN BY TALKING ABOUT THE FIRST FEW MONTHS AFTER TBS BOUGHT THE NWA FROM JIM CROCKETT WHEN DUSTY RHODES WAS STILL BOOKING THE NWA.

JIM CORNETTE: Basically, November 1, 1988, everybody thought, "This is going to be great!" Now a big time company with a lot of money owns the wrestling, so now everybody's going to get paid. We had all heard the stories that Crockett was in financial trouble and all that and everybody was wondering what was going to go on. So most of the guys thought it was going to be great. They all had visions of better TV productions and more money for advertising and make the guys, sort of what Vince McMahon has done, make them celebrities.

KELLER: WASN'T IT AROUND THIS TIME THAT YOU SHOT THE FAMOUS ANGLE WITH PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY?

Yes. November 3rd we did the angle with Paul E. Dangerously and The Original Midnight Express (Dennis Condrey and Randy Rose). And everybody went apes over it. All the guys said it was great. All the sheets said it was great. All the people were talking about it, coming up to me, "Jesus Christ, what about Paul E. Dangerously!?" And we were full-fledged babyfaces for the first time ever. And we did not work with them through the month of November, because if we had been booked as babyfaces, that would have tipped everyone off. That was one thing Dusty was always careful about, not to tip off stuff like this. So we had kind of a strange period there in the month of November because we had to finish off the rest of our bookings against people that were babyfaces. With matches against The Road Warriors, it was kind of a mixed up deal, because they turned soon after our turn. We wrestled Dusty and Bam Bam Bigelow, too. It was kind of weird. We were really hitting every TV and Paul E. and I were hitting it hard. There was a lot of interest in it, so I figured when our first matches took place they would really be going nuts over it.

Lo and behold, the second week of December is when we had our first matches in the arenas against The Original Midnight Express. When I get the booking sheets, I notice we are booked second on the shows. The first match we had with them was in Las Vegas. It was sold out and when we got out there, the people were going absolutely berserk. I think Meltzer even printed in the Observer that he set his Coke down on the chair and the noise and stomping and everything vibrated the Coke off the chair onto the floor. Paul E. told me that is his proudest moment to this day, to get a

response like that from a crowd for our match. It was just unbelievable. But here's the thing, we were second on the show. People even walked up to me in the Showboat afterwards, we were going back to our room, and I said to them, "Hey, aren't you guys staying for the rest of the matches?" and they said, "No, we just came to see yours."

But anyway, I thought, the thing to do was a really hot DQ and have them get some heat on us. And I worked some shit out that we could do and J.J. Dillon sent word to us, "We need a fifteen minute Broadway." What? I said, "Can we put them over? Can we do a DQ? Can we win? (laughs) If you need time, we can put in more than twenty minutes and then do our finish." "No. He said Broadway."

When was the last time you ever had a hot program, a hot angle, and the first match is the second match on the card and you go to a twenty minute draw? So they said we could do some stuff afterwards. So what we did was we went to a twenty minute draw and then we got into it. In the end, I hit Paul E. and then Randy and Dennis jumped me and kicked the shit out of me, they tied Stan up in the ropes and gutt-shot him with the racket and they tried to hang Bobby with the belt and tried to crawl over to save them and Dennis hit me in the throat and down I went. So it was hot stuff, but still, a draw?

KELLER: SO THEN WHAT HAPPENED?

CORNETTE: (laughs) So the next night we were in San Francisco and this time, of course, it's a smarter audience and going twenty minutes to a draw really sucked. I complained again that night, let us put them over, let us do anything. "No." So we go out for our match and get half the response we could have gotten if we were able to do a finish and J.J. is standing there in back with a smile on his face. I go to him, "Yeah, that really sucked, didn't it?" So the next night we're in Albuquerque, New Mexico and they tell us to go to a twenty minute draw again. So I told the referee - me and Stan and Bobby were all crowdin' over him - and I said, "Look, we're gonna' do a DQ. So when I come in and nail you to get you out of the way, ring the bell." Because this was horseshit. And we did and the people bought it like crazy and we did the same hot stuff with them beatin' the shit out of us afterwards. And the people were going nuts. And we get back and J.J.'s goin' nuts. "Well, you just pack your bags and go home until you talk to Jimmy Crockett." Those were his exact words. I said, "You tell Jimmy Crockett if he wants to talk to me, he can call me. If you don't want this program

to draw and you don't want us to do any business, tell us ahead of time instead of us doin' all this shit and lettin' me cut my head off and lettin' all these guys do all these bumps and havin' us go second and have us go to a draw every night in the first match of every program. And I asked him the question, "When was the last time you had a hot angle booked and it was put second on a card and gone twenty minutes to draw?" He stormed off.

So anyway, that night we packed our bags and intended to go home. The next morning I said before we fly all the way from Albuquerque, New Mexico to Charlotte, North Carolina, I'm gonna call somebody. I'm not going to call Jimmy Crockett because Dusty was the booker and I didn't have Dusty's number, as I recall, so I called Flair. I had his number and knew he was home. So I tell him, "Well, we got fired." "What?!" So I told him the whole story and he said to please call Jimmy Crockett. So I called Jimmy Crockett. "I've already heard about it," he said. "Dusty was replaced as booker." And that was within the last couple days. "Don't mind J.J., because he's just mourning the loss of a friend. I don't know who sent the finish for us to go twenty minutes to a time-limit draw because I didn't know who was calling the shots. I do know he (Dusty) gave us all the support in the world for the first month of the program."

KELLER: HOW WAS IT WITHOUT DUSTY AS BOOKER?

CORNETTE: Jimmy Crockett replaced Dusty and he said from the start he was only going to be booker until they could find a booker. He said he could maintain and knows the rules of thumb, but he was not a creative booker. Well, it's Christmas break now and then we get back on December 26 and it's time for Starrcade. Jimmy Crockett told us basically what he thought we might do at Starrcade and what we might do for a finish. As I recall we had a pretty good match and they got heat on us again at the finish. When we were babyfaces, especially with Paul E., we liked to sell and put heat on the heels we were working with because we knew conversely what it was like when you couldn't get heat on the babyfaces we had worked with. We were going to be sure as babyfaces we got some sympathy.

KELLER: WHAT LED TO THE DECISION TO GET RID OF RANDY ROSE OF THE ORIGINAL EXPRESS?

CORNETTE: Well, then the next day Jimmy Crockett came to me and said something like, "You know, I just don't like Randy Rose. So I think we're going to have to take Randy Rose out and get Dennis a new partner." I'm like, well jeez, ain't this a little quick? We've only had ten matches with the guys. And Randy Rose always worked his butt off and was always where he was supposed to be. If he had any shortcomings as far as work, he made up for it by busting his ass. But what do you do, that's what the guy said. He made plans to have at Chi-Town Rumble that the loser of the fall leaves the NWA.

Well, it's around the first week of January (1989) and they are hinting that a new booker was going to be hired soon. Anyway, the pay-per-view has been booked and interviews have been done saying the loser of the fall has to leave the NWA and it's going to be Randy Rose. And also, for some reason, and I didn't know why, although later maybe we found out, they started booking us in the spot shows. We never did a Midnight-Midnight bout in Philadelphia, which is our strongest town. We were booked there once and because of weather problems, we couldn't get out of Charlotte. But we could have done a good run there. And this was the same time they decided they were going to save money and not fly the managers.

Paul E. was hot. I mean he was livid. I was hot, too, because The Midnight Express never worked without me unless I had to do something specifically. I argued with them and J.J. was doing the transportation, and somehow J.J. always managed to go to the town. And Gary Hart always managed to get to the town most of the time. Yet Paul E. and I were getting left off. Not on Midnight-Midnight matches because they were booking us against different people. So I go to them, I don't want to get paid for not doing anything. I want to go with my team because it's not The Midnight Express without the three of us.

So I remember we're getting booked on these spot shows in North Carolina while the big boys were on a West Coast swing in Seattle, San Francisco, and something else. Well, daggum, if we weren't the main event and didn't sell out the places, Midnight vs. Original Midnight. In three days, we came within three grand of what the West Coast swing did. And it was like there was no reason why they were sticking us in the middle of no where.

KELLER: MAYBE THEY WANTED TO DRAW BIGGER CROWDS AT THE SPOT SHOWS.

CORNETTE: Well, we only had one Midnight-Midnight match in Baltimore, one in Atlanta, one in Charlotte, and there were a lot of big cities that we never did the match once from when the angle was shot until the end of February.

I came to believe the reason we were getting buried even after George Scott was fired was because of our contract. I heard from several people in and out of the company that when TBS took over immediately we had tremendous heat

because of our contract.

KELLER: WHY WAS THERE HEAT OVER YOUR CONTRACT?

CORNETTE: Great, now we're going to have to backtrack. March of 1988, it was. We were making no money. We were making legitimately seven, eight, nine-hundred dollar weeks. The reason why for that was we had started several programs with people, like The New Breed, then they got into the car wreck, and Dusty & Nikita, and Nikita quit because his wife got sick. We had started a lot of things with guys that never panned out because the other team fell apart. So they didn't have anything for us except spot show matches around the Carolina's with the Garvin brothers and we weren't getting on the big towns.

At this point, we had two really good years in the NWA and weren't on the verge of leaving. So we went in and said, "Jimmy, the point is it's not our fault we don't have anybody to work with here. We're not making any money because we're not on any of the big shows. So now we're getting penalized." And we had heard they were going to make all this money on the pay-per-views and they had said TBS was going to pay everyone who was on the then-new "NWA Main Event" show like it was a house show. The guys would get some of the TV ad revenue money, like a couple grand for the main event and less for the second. The first match would split something like \$700. So bigger and better things were supposedly on the way.

So we say, "Look Jimmy, we've been here for the past couple years, we've done all you want, you've treated us really nice, and we've made a lot of money. But right now we're not making any money and it's not our fault. We would at least like to get something on paper." We were on a three year contract at that time and had another year to run, 100 grand minimum and that meant if you didn't make a 100 grand minimum by the end of the year, they would "balloon payment" the difference at the end of the year. Well, they never had to do that before because we always made well over that, but it didn't look like we were going to make that. So the bottom line was we said we wanted to renegotiate our contract. He said fine, come on in.

So he spent something like 35 minutes telling us all about the big things that were going to happen to make Jim Crockett Promotions a lot of money, ad revenue, the pay-per-views, and TBS was going to this and that, with joint ventures, and dolls and merchandise. Oh, by the way, the total sum of money I received from the merchandise sales in the three years that he was there was like, fifty-one dollars. This was before the sale was talked about. But he went on and on and would never mention an amount. And I didn't want to be the first one to mention anything. But finally, I figured I have to throw a figure out just to get the ball rolling so I'll be ridiculous. So I say, "Jimmy, it sounds like you're saying we'll make a quarter of a million dollars this year." And I'm waitin' for the laughs, right. He said, "Well, I can't remember what I figured you at but it's in the neighborhood." So I say, "Jesus H. Christ, when you get your figures and everything next week, let's bet back together into the same neighborhood." He said okay.

So the next week we had a meeting with him and went back into the office and I said, "Jimmy when we last left off we were in the neighborhood of \$250,000 each." I'm still thinking to myself there is something wrong here. And he said, "Well, I had you figure at \$200,000." And, Wade, I'm like, what the fuck? So I say, "Let's say we split the difference and say \$225,000 a piece." I'm waiting for the laughs again, right? And he says, "Okay." What in the hell is going on here, I ask myself? \$100,000 to \$225,000. I'm goin', at least let's get it on paper. So he had the things printed up and we signed the sonovabitches. And we left there going, "There's something wrong here, but at least we got it on paper so we can take him to court."

So anyway, I come to later find out that at this time he knew, or at least I think he knew, judging from a deposition he gave in a lawsuit we were in, they were in financial trouble. It wasn't because the wrestling hadn't been drawing. It partly was because their bookkeeper was a complete moron. He was a great bookkeeper when it was a three-state territory but when it became a national commune, he was totally incompetent. He had let them get a couple million in the hole before he even had the stuff caught up with to know. And the TV ad revenue stuff they were supposed to get didn't materialize. So all of a sudden they realized, "Hey, we're just about broke!" So he knew all or part of this when he signed the contract. Heck, we were still working for the same money that we were when we renegotiated. The only thing we had was a thing that said if we didn't make that much by the end of the year it would be made up. Well, at the end of the year either he'd be in business and make it up or he wouldn't be in business and he wouldn't have to pay us a dime. Well, this was all well in good.

Then, at that same time, I talked to Bobby Fulton, and plugged him to Dusty and got The Fantastics in and we worked a program with him and had good matches and all was good in love and war. The summer Bashes were really good, so we were happy for the time being. In fact, we went

right out of the Fantastics thing right into the Tully and Arn thing. And then we made more big money because the Tully and Arn thing drew really well. We got paid every two weeks. During those two weeks we worked eight days, six of those were matches with Tully and Arn, and we made a payoff of something like \$5000. The second week was the same. The houses were tremendous. Then all of a sudden they quit and went to New York. So then we had a little lull there and that's when we thought of the Midnight-Midnight program. So anyway, that brings us back to January of 1989.

When TBS took over on November 1 they were paying their contract guys bi-weekly which means they had to pay us \$4500 a week. We were making more money or close to what Flair, The Road Warriors, and Lex Luger were. And I heard that was getting us a lot of heat. Well, it wasn't our fault, it was Jimmy Crockett's fault. I mean, it was indeed a totally outrageous sum of money considering the business the company was doing. But at the same what are we going to do, tell them, "No, take it back!" See, when Jimmy Crockett sold to TBS, he owed us \$66,000 shortfall payment. We had to settle for 40 cents on the dollar. Jimmy Crockett kept promising me up until two days before I talked to his lawyer that we'd get our money. Then his lawyer calls up and says we'd have to settle for 40 cents on the dollar and we're going to pay you guys first because you've been here the longest. But if you don't take this, you don't get nothin'. So we took 40 cents on the dollar and got \$26,000 instead of \$66,000, still a nice tidy sum. Then TBS had to start paying us and they had to pay their contract guys bi-weekly, which was great.

KELLER: AFTER TBS BOUGHT CROCKETT, WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION TO GEORGE SCOTT BEING HIRED AS BOOKER?

CORNETTE: Paul E. sat down with me again, "George Scott, my god, he hadn't booked in ten years. Think of the last great manager that George Scott used." I said I couldn't think of any. But me, the eternal optimist is thinking, "Gee, I've heard great things about the guy. They did big business in the Mid-Atlanta in the late-seventies when he was around. He was a booker for years. A lot of the old-timers that were around when he was there said they made big money. The guys in the Carolinas were said to make anywhere from \$3000 to \$6000 a week back at that time and that was just in three states. So I said, "Let's give this guy a chance. I'm sure he's open to reason and it will be great."

Fuck! George Scott, and please print this, is the biggest jack-off I have ever met in the wrestling business and imagine what kind of territory that takes in. He was either on something or had some brain disease or something because you could not follow the guy. When they hired George Scott, immediately our TV time was cut in quarters. As everybody remembers, the TV ground to a screeching halt. There was nothin' happening on those TV's. They were god-awful. He convinced TBS to bring The Iron Sheik in and sign him to a contract for \$100,000 saying he'd make them millions. He brought JYD back. He brought Muta in. The first night that Muta was at TV we were all watching his stuff going, "Ohh, ahh, jeez, god what a natural babyface." And George is sitting there at the monitor telling Gary (Hart), we're going to have him start throwing salt. I mean, George Scott just butchered anything he did. The TV ratings plummeted. The houses started dying. Interest in wrestling was horrible. Steamboat was already in. I guess Jimmy Crockett made the deal because he was in before George Scott was. They had already done that, so Steamboat was the one good thing about the George Scott period and I don't think George Scott was responsible.

I knew that there was trouble when at the first big meeting and (Jim) Herd had just come in a couple weeks ago and we had never heard about him. All I knew about him was that he had done wrestling TV directing before he become a TV person. Well, they had a big meeting where George Scott is brought in and all the boys are there. Jim Herd gives this big speech about how they're going to catch New York (the WWF), by god, and go head to head with Wrestlemania, by god, and it's like he's running for congress or something. Then he turns the floor to George Scott, the new booker, and the first thing he says is, "Well, I tell ya' something guys, we're really gonna' have to go for that old wrestling. We're gonna lay those punches in." And I'm going, "This guy is going to lead this massive multi-million dollar company and the only thing he can say is we're going to lay these kicks in during his first meeting in front of the boys?"

KEKLER: WHAT CHANGES DID GEORGE SCOTT MAKE?

CORNETTE: With George Scott, he instituted the New York way of doing television where you tape a bunch of matches on night and put them together as the shows. Well, I always kept track of what shows were taped what date and when they would air and whatnot. Well, I got lost. By my count in a four or five week period, we must have taped twenty matches that never aired. We just taped a shit-load of matches every TV night and sometimes they'd air and sometimes they wouldn't. And there were no interviews in



CORNETTE & THE EXPRESS (By Keller)

the shows, except for one or two. He didn't believe in interviews. So our thing, The Midnight-Original Midnight thing is butchered entirely. Besides the fact he told me and Paul E., "This thing is centered around you two. What about your boys?" So I said, "Jimmy Crockett, who was booker here, like, last week, told us because he didn't like Randy Rose and was going to get rid of him, that we should center it around ourselves." So one week we're told to do one thing and the next week we're taken to task for something the previous boss told us to do. So I went up to George and asked him if we were going to get some interview time to do this, we've done about three weeks of TV, but no interviews to explain this thing. So he says, "Well, there's been too much talkin' done around here. Don't worry, you'll get time. So on Atlanta TV, I used to go over to the desk for, like, three years during our studio matches and I'd harass the commentators and talk about what was going on - Dusty always encouraged that because it was extra promo time. A lot of the attraction of what I did to people was when we would take people and beat them up over at the desk.

KELLER: AND MAKE FUN OF DAVID CROCKETT, TOO.

CROCKETT: Make fun of David Crockett, sure. So I go over there one day and after that George Scott says, "Who told you to go over to the desk?" I said, "Nobody." He said, "So why did you do it?" I said, "I've been doing it for about three years now, every week." So he said, "Don't do that anymore unless you're told." I said, "Well, I won't, but nobody told me not to." "Well, I'm running things around here now and people are going to get away with doing any old thing they want to."

This is the same George Scott, that when Brian Pillman, who was scheduled to come in, he called up George and said, "George, I see you're the new booker. I just wanted to make sure my start date was the same." He said, "What's your name?" "Brian Pillman." "What? I never heard of you."

Here's the thing, George Scott takes over the booking job of the NWA. The Italian Stallion has been on the NWA on TBS for probably at least five years now. Stallion called up and asked for his bookings and George Scott said, "Italian Stallion? Boy, I've never heard of you?" The guy had been on national TV for five years. I can understand the guy not wanting to use him, but never heard of him?!

He put cards together that didn't make any sense. He had guys working angles - well, not angles, because he didn't do angles on TV - but guys in some kind of program on TV and then book them against everyone but the guy they had the programs with in the arenas. I would say Ole Anderson was twice or three times as good a booker as George Scott, even when he wasn't trying.

So George Scott says, "It's a shame we're too far into this to cut the program off, because I would keep Randy Rose."

KELLER: DID GEORGE SCOTT HAVE ANY PERSONAL AXES TO GRIND WITH ANY OF YOU?

CORNETTE: Yeah, here's thing. Stan and I had never met or worked for him before. Bobby had met him before. In 1980, Bobby was working in Atlanta when George Scott came in as booker. And the first week that George was in, Bobby called up and said, "George, they just put the TV belt on

me a couple weeks ago, I would like to know what your plans are for me." He said something like, "I don't know what we're going to do with you." (laughs) They didn't even take the belt off of him and he just left. Bobby thought he better get out of there. This was nine years ago, right? We figured, certainly no problem over that. George Scott hadn't acknowledged Bobby Eaton yet. He would walk past Bobby in the hallway like he was "Casper the Goddam Friendly Ghost." One time, he actually had to step around him to get somewhere and didn't even speak. So we knew we were fucked.

So it was at this point that Herd says, "Of course, we're going to have to renegotiate y'all's contract which are up in April. Obviously you're not going to get the kind of money you're getting now." I go, "I know, it's a totally outrageous amount. Ridiculous. But we took it. But don't worry, you'll have no problem. We'll be happy to take a cut in pay at this point."

Well, when we went in to talk Herd, we had several meetings. One was when he took us to lunch and said, "Well, I talked to George and I'm not really sure what he's going to do with you guys, but I can offer ya' a \$100,000." I said, "Geez, that's not a cut, that's an amputation. Is there a middle ground somewhere." And he said, "Not that I can see. You need to talk to George and see what he wants to do." Now, \$100,000 a year is a lot of money anyway, but we had to see what \$\$\$ (Scott) had to say and how he was going to use us. So I went up to the guy - boy I wish I could remember all the other stupid things George Scott had done... Here's one thing. Paul Jones had become his assistant, quit managing and started becoming a road agent, wearing a suit and tie. That's when they laid down the rules: no talking on the microphone, guys can't wear shorts to the matches, and all these damn rules. Here's a company that's fixin' to go down the porcelain throne and they're talking like these rules will save it. So every time that Paul Jones had the opportunity to remind me of one of George's rules, like don't talk on the microphone, he would. Well, I'm a babyface manager and am not always working against a heel manager, so I'm tryin' to get on the microphone every now and then and say a few things to make them happy. So I get heat for that. And it's something new every week that we were doing wrong.

So anyway, it was about this time that the Chicago pay-per-view took place with Midnight-Midnight. Of course, Dennis Condrey didn't show up so they beat Randy Rose anyway. George Scott said he'd find a way to bring him back anyway. So now we're assuming since Dennis and Randy are gone, we've got no program. So he gave the Samoans to Paul E. and wanted us to work with the Samoans. Well, the Samoans started trying to goozle us and beat us up like red headed stop children and beat (pin) us, too. It was killing us off. The whole idea of us being babyfaces was we were dirty guys who would give the heels a piece of their own medicine. We weren't averse to doing jobs at all. What we're pissed off about was that the team we were supposed to work with wouldn't do any of our spots, wanted to beat us up the whole match, and then wanted to beat us besides. And that's what they were doing. In case no one noticed, they've got one match their capable of doing and that is they have the babyface duck and they hit each other a lot and take bumps for each other and then beat up the other guys and beat them. And it was the shits working for The Samoans and we had stinko matches with them because they were looking past us so they could get over so they could take on some big-time team somewhere. And probably the office was telling them to do that. But when I'd go to Paul Jones - you'd never find George Scott because he never went to the towns, just TV, and there he wouldn't talk to us - I'd ask Jones or somebody and ask if our role was just supposed to be meat for these guys to get them over. Then they'd say no, it wasn't supposed to be that way, so I told them to once watch our match.

So anyway, Herd tells us to talk to George Scott. Well, we went to TV one day early and said, "George, we need to get a chance to talk to you about Herd's deal with our contract. We'll be over here in this corner, so whenever you get a free moment we'd like to have a meeting with you. Well, we were there from 3:00 in the afternoon until 10:00 in the evening. We talked to everyone in the place, but. So we went back to talk to Jim Herd and said we hadn't been able to talk to George yet. We can't corner him. So Herd finally cornered George Scott and made him talk to us at TV in Atlanta. George Scott told us he didn't have anything to do with contracts. So I say, "Yet, but you're the booker and we need to talk to you to find out what you want to do with us. Jim Herd says we need to do that." So George says, "Well, I don't have anything to do with the contract money. That's up to Jim Herd." "Yes, but Jim Herd needs to know how you're going to use us so he knows how to pay us." "Well, in my day there weren't contracts and I don't want to get involved in that and the money." I say, "George! The point is you are the booker and as the booker, you decide how we are used. How we are used determines how much we are worth to the company, thus you do have a bearing on our contract negotiations."

Then he started talking to us. I said, "How do you want

to use us." "Well, I don't really know how I'm going to use you boys." I'm like, flashback! Bobby's ready to head for the door at this point.

So he complains that he doesn't know who Bobby and Stan are from watching TV and he complains that there's not much he can do with a babyface manager. So he says, "I can see you guys and somebody in an eight-man against The Samoans, Paul E., and Jack Victory where four guys are in the ring at the same time." He didn't give us any idea what his plans were for us. He thought it was stupid that I got so much attention. It just brought out the fact that he didn't know anything before he got there and hadn't watched TV in five years. He didn't go to the matches so he didn't know didly about what was happening on the road except for what Paul Jones or some stooge would tell him.

George Scott was Jim Herd's first great move as head of the NWA was to hire this @\$\$\$. So at any rate, we went back and told Jim Herd, who at this point had been nice to us; I had no complaint with him. I said, "Jim Herd. \$100,000 is a lot of money and all things the same, we would sign it and take it and be happy because we want to be in the NWA. But we don't think George Scott knows how to use us and he's just going to beat us. We've been too successful to get turned into job guys. We have no angles or program and we get beat every night, so I think we better just leave for a while and see if things change in the future."

So Herd goes, "Fine, I understand how it is." Because obviously they wanted rid of us in the first place. But the one thing he said to be, "I can't overrule my booker. If he screws up bad enough, I'll fire him, but I can't overrule him." Well, they ought to write those words on a tombstone somewhere: famous last words. So we agreed to finish up April 9 at the Omni. I had already planned to take a month off and Bill Dundee was booking Continental and called us about making a few shots in May.

KELLER: DID THE FIRING OF GEORGE SCOTT CHANGE YOUR PLANS TO LEAVE?

CORNETTE: It was April 1st or 2nd when they fired George Scott because the TV ratings hit an all-time bottom, the house shows were drawing terrible for matches like Ricky Steamboat defending the NWA World Title against The Iron Sheik. And not only that, but he made the Clash of the Champions such a secret like they were putting people in the Federal Witness Protection Program on the card. He refused to promote it because he said it would kill the house shows. Well, goddamn, when you work for a TV company, you better promote TV shows and put the house shows second. But George Scott was probably thinking, "We'll make \$25,000 in Philly," while blowing away a million dollar TV production.

So they fired him. My only problem was that they kept his hatchet-headed rotten son Byron on for another month. What a stooge. He'd stand there acting like he was reading a newspaper with his head cocked over to listen to your conversation in the dressing room. Bobby wanted to kill him at one point. Almost every guy in that company wanted to kill him and I didn't think he would get out of there alive.

They fired Scott on the first and called me on the third. Herd said, "Well, since the situation has changed somewhat after we get over this New Orleans Clash thing, maybe we can talk. I later found out the committee that replaced Scott was stressing the need to get The Midnight Express back. So I told him we already were going to take the month off and had already committed to some May dates. So I suggested we wait to return until June. So that's what we did.

KELLER: HOW DID CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS GO FOR YOUR JUNE RETURN?

CORNETTE: Herd still wouldn't hardly come up on the money from what he offered us. Now here's an example of him throwing away fifty grand of his company's money.

When I was talking to him about our contracts, I told him that I thought they were worth more than two grand a week considering the pay scale of your other employees. I have to tell them not to sign for that. So I wanted him to increase his pay for Bobby and Stan. I could live with his offer because my job was easier. Well, he calls me back and offers me more money, so he says they wanted me to co-host the new Friday night program they were trying and also help out on the 900 line. I told him that didn't help because I can't tell Bobby and Stan to sign for that and I can't sign unless they're happy. So he calls me back and again offers me even more money. He offered them more money the second time, too. But he was coming up on me twice what he was going up with the wrestlers. Herd goes on to say there are a lot of ways he can justify padding my money because of all the TV stuff I was going to do. He said the only thing they could do was wrestle. Yeah, that's pretty bad, the only thing they can do is wrestle for a wrestling promotion. Finally he made the offer and I told him I would call him back. I couldn't get a hold of Bobby and Stan so I decided to take the deals because he offered Bobby and Stan what I had set they should take, he

was also offering fifty thousand more a year than what I would have originally settled for.

So I called Jim Ross and Eddie Gilbert and Kevin Sullivan, members of the booking committee at the time. We decided I would come back for the World Tag Team Tournament from the Clash in Ft. Bragg, which we did. We worked with The Freebirds quite a bit which was quite an experience, because they were trying to be superman at the time and Terry Gordy was the only one who would sell; I don't know what sense that makes. After Dr. Death went off one night in Boston, nearly killed Garvin and Hayes, they finally started working with us a little bit.

During the summer, things were cool. We were doing the six-mans with Doc, but the committee and I agreed we needed to switch back heel but we decided to come back in and maneuver ourselves to a position where we were able to do it. So I came up with this angle where I would get involved with another babyface team and not manage them, but just help them out. But later on it would come out that there was a conflict between Stan and one of the guys on the team and we would milk this soap opera thing where you didn't know which way I was going to go. I figured everybody saw the turn coming, everyone was smart to turns now. So how do you create interest in a turn when they can see it coming? You don't know who's gonna' turn or which way I was going to go which would hopefully mean they would stay tuned to see what was going to happen.

So Jim Ross had the idea to give a big push to this new team, The Dynamic Dudes. So we come back and The Dudes decide they want to go to Japan. Well, this was right when we were going to do the angle, but they said Herd told them they could go. And he did. But then I heard it was more like they came to him while he was doing something and asked if they could go to Japan he said, "Yeah, sure, whatever." Who knows.

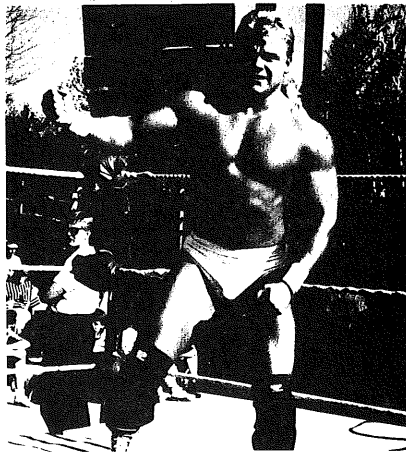
But anyway they get themselves booked in TV and people are hot at him and so they start to get buried on TV doing jobs and everything. Now we had to wait until they get back from Japan and are beaten like drums to do this turn with them. And, if you go back and watch that Nashville WrestleWar pay-per-view, when the Dudes beat the Samoans, they got over strong, initially. I'm not saying the thing would have left the world on fire or anything. But right off the bat we're at a handicap after they buried them and they were in Japan for six months and they blame it on an injury. Now a team that is coming back from an injury after getting beat to death, we got to turn on them. No other babyface team was available. But I thought, maybe this could work. We could have some good matches with them and they're young, good-lookin' babyfaces. Well, I underestimated how cynical or obnoxious the general public has gotten. People don't want to see babyface babyfaces anymore.

So anyway, we're doing that. Now about this same time, Ric Flair has become booker. He was kind of dismayed at the way the business was taken with The Ding Dongs. This is another Jim Herd story. He told us about this first when we were negotiating our contracts and I thought, god, this will never happen. Then I see them on the television and I flipped out. His other deal that never came about, The Hunchbacks, the team that can never get pinned. Flair, I think, didn't like the direction the promotion and the committee was taking. So he pulled a few strings and got the book. But they basically gave him the booking job so he could fail at it because there were so many built in handicaps.

So Flair calls me and says I want you to be on the booking committee with me because you've got good ideas and he could basically trust me not to stab him in the back. Somehow the story has gotten out that Eddie Gilbert opened the office door one day and I was sitting there (see Torch 1989 Mid-Year Annual, "Torch Talk with Eddie Gilbert, My Side"). To put this to rest, Eddie Gilbert and I co-existed on the booking committee for about six weeks. The problem was Eddie and Flair had the problems dating back a couple of years and some things happened, I'm not going to elaborate on them for fear of criticism from both sides, but some things happened and Flair removed Eddie from the booking committee six weeks after I had gotten on it - totally unrelated.

KELLER: WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION OF THE NWA AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS OF BEING RUN BY THE HUGE CORPORATION, TBS?

CORNETTE: What a fuckin' mess! I mean, it was ridiculous. This was my first opportunity to deal with Jim Herd on a regular basis and it was my first opportunity to see inside this corporate machinery of TBS and find out what exactly shapes the wrestling product we see on our television screen. I've saved all the memos and stuff I got, I wish I was at home and I could read them to you. But basically you get a memo from Jeff Carr, the head of programming at TBS back then. He was a frustrated wrestling booker. In fact, I think when they bought the company, he thought he would be on the booking committee. Then when they told him to shut up with his ideas, he got hot and criticized at every opportunity. They laid down guidelines that you couldn't throw fire at anybody, you couldn't bleed or it would be edited out, you could not



SHANE DOUGLAS (By Keller)

beat someone with a blunt instrument such as chairs, the staple of wrestling. You couldn't have lewd or provocative clothing. You couldn't use racial remarks or religious slurs. We'd get memos on what we could do and what we couldn't do.

They actually got a bunch of people in that company in all the departments and polled them on what the wrestling company should do and what kind of characters they should introduce. They came up with stuff like a wrestler called "The Beast Master" because they had rights to the movie. They wanted to find a "Super Woman" wrestler and divide the guys into A, B, and C lists and she would beat the guys on the B and C lists. They did reports on what the strengths and weaknesses were of each of the individual stars. It was a bunch of yuppie corporate executives who say, "Yeah, this would be neat. Yeah, this would be funny. People would be falling over laughing at this shit." They didn't have any more understanding of the wrestling business than the man in the moon. They were making a big joke out of this. Robocop. Who could forget that.

KELLER: YOU MENTIONED JIM HERD EARLIER. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HIM AT THIS POINT?

CORNETTE: The more you were around this guy, the more you realized that he had not any more about what to do about professional wrestling than the man in the moon. Instead of staying out of it and letting the wrestling people present the wrestling and taking care of the business himself, he had to get involved in everything. He gave me the opinion that everyone was out to screw him if he let you get away for too long. He once said, "I'm going to know what's going on in these arenas. You guys aren't going to get away with anything." It was like we were trying to stage some type of subversive takeover.

So at these booking meetings, at first Flair, Kevin, and I would take care of the booking. I would take the notes. Herd instituted regular booking meetings because he wanted to know what was going on. So he and Barnette would sit in on those. Whenever you had Herd around, you couldn't get shit done. He would go into tirades about different things he was upset about that week and different things that he thought should be done. I started calling him "Dr. Jeckyl and Mr. Herd." He seemed to be schizophrenic.

One week he made a big deal about getting better job guys, even if we had to fly them in so there would be better bouts on TV. So everybody started calling these guys that could work and we would fly them in for TV to put guys over. Well, ten days or two weeks later, he was in the office of the lady who does travel saying he didn't want to fly another person in for TV's. "If they can't drive, they ain't coming." Just 180 degree turns. It started to be just so... not fun to do this.

Now this is about the time we're doing The Dudes thing. And next he starts getting on me. "You know what? This is pabulum." Those are his exact words. Well, I guarantee this ain't going to sell the Omni out, but it's entertaining television. So then he started getting on me about the number of everybody's interviews on the TV shows. He said he knew as soon as I got on the committee there would be more talking. He even called while on vacation in Louisville in November for seven days. He called me at home to give me hell for the TV formats. I guess he couldn't get a hold of anyone else, so he got me out of bed in Louisville. "I was in St. Louis over the weekend and I watched NWA Pro and in the first 20 minutes of the show there was only seven minutes of wrestling." I said, "Jim, I just happened to have that format in front of me and there happens to be seven minutes in the first match. On the whole show, there's only six minutes worth of interviews." St. Louis happened to be the only place in the entire history of professional wrestling where they never had interviews. He thought the announcers would sell the show. I said the announcers aren't going to sell anything, they explain things, but the wrestlers sell. The

people don't flip the channels during the interviews, they flip the channels during the TV matches.

Herd got upset at me one time. Kendall Windham got arrested. They call me up from the office and say Kendall's in jail, he's booked on these cards, what do we do? I look at the talent list and fill in the slots. Third match on the card we make a substitution, no big deal. The next booking committee, Herd says we have to do something about these card changes and then says, "I'm looking at you, Cornette, when I say that." What did I do? Plant counterfeit money? What am I, sitting at home trying to figure out how to send these guys away somewhere so they can't work the cards.

Here's another rule Jim Herd implemented. Say by January 15 we had to have March booked and by February 15 we needed April booked, etc. That's ten weeks ahead which is ludicrous in the wrestling business. People quit, people get injured, angles take a turn. You can have an idea of which direction major angles are taking and fill in the undercard five weeks out in time to get the promos out. So then, whenever we booked, we booked March six times. Because we were supposed to have March booked by January 15. Sting blew his knee out, Luger got switched, and between guys hired and fired... One time we had March completely booked and then they added ten towns two weeks after the month was supposed to be booked on the same nights as when matches were already booked. So we had to not only rearrange the ten dates that had an additional card, but all of them, because of travel. Otherwise we'd end up with a guy in Idaho one night and Florida the next. Then they complained about spending too much on plane tickets. We booked March six fuckin' times!

Now is when it started to manifest that he was not happy with The Midnight Express. Herd started to say all he saw was The Midnight Express. It was like I got on the booking committee to make \$300 extra a week and spent that much on long distance calls purely to get the Midnight Express over and make them World Tag Team straps. (sarcastically) Okay, sorry, I'm guilty. I had the Midnight on two weekly shows out of the six weeks. And he hated the thing with the Dudes and wanted to cut that off. Then we gave Bobby a title match with Flair right after we switched back heel. We had a main event with Flair on a Sunday night. It did like a 3.2. It was the third or fourth highest rating of Main Event at that point. Then Herd asks how Bobby, a middle card guy, could get a title match. Before I popped up, I think Kevin Sullivan popped up and said, "He got a title match because it's going to get a hell of a rating on TV and he's one of the best wrestler in the world." So Herd said we didn't explain the thing. I said we challenged him to it the week before on TV and he accepted it and we plugged it on three shows leading up to it. Then his big line that I always use to crack Flair and Kevin and all of them up, "So what did he do, fall in on a parachute?"

Then when we had the rematch, it was just horrible. Flair did a DQ in the first match, he didn't want to beat Bobby, so Herd went crazy and was sure that I was at the root of it. "Flair couldn't beat Bobby Eaton?!" So the next daggum time when we had the rematch, which also did great ratings, I took care of that, because Flair not only pulled me in the ring and hit me with my own tennis racket and then pin Bobby, but he did it right in front of Stan. So he beat all three of us. It didn't hurt us. People were throwing cups at us and we had a ton of heat. Bobby knows how to do that. Herd had a cow. Anytime I suggested The Midnight Express do anything, Herd would say that's all I was on the committee for. I said the Midnight Express happen to be one of many guys that I suggested ideas for, including the invisible Skyscrapers, whenever one was there, the other one wouldn't be.

Every week he would rent a hotel board room and fly us all in for booking meetings. We could have a booking meeting in a backseat if he would have left it for me and Kevin and Flair. We had a meeting one time, seven hours long, didn't do anything. I didn't walk out with one note on my pad. All we got were memos on what was goin' wrong.

So we were having a wrestling discussion. I was trying to tell Jim Herd my feelings on wrestling talent. "Jim," I said, "Sid Vicious might make you a million dollars in one night." He says there ain't nothing wrong with a million dollars. "Yeah, but he might go to New York. He might never be able to work. He might quit. But you take a guy like Arn Anderson, he's a tremendous wrestler. He's not going to make you a million dollars in one night, but he knows what to do, he knows how to get over, he knows how to get guys over, he knows how to get time on television. A guy like that will make you consistent money over the period of seven years. If it was me, I'd go with consistency and people I can depend on and people who don't cause me problems." Herd says ya' use Sid and then a couple months down the line you get someone else to replace him. Well, I don't know who's over the corner squatting creating these guys, Dr. Frankenstein? Here's the same people that would sign up Iron Sheik for \$100,000 a year and then let the contract roll over by not sending him a termination letter so he got it for another year. And he

actually had a publicized drug conviction. I'm not saying the guy should never work again, but how about a consistent standard here.

Tully and Arn quit the job (in the WWF) where they would have probably made a couple a hundred grand each a year, quit while their tag champs, because they (NWA) told them they could get a three year contract. Here Tully's already given notice, he'd passed all the other drug tests, he didn't care, so he did something and got suspended. That was fine, he thought, he didn't want to finish anyway. Now they tell him they won't hire him. And because of that, they tell Arn Anderson they're going to cut his contract practically in half from what they told him he would get because they thought they were getting a team. Well, they were getting a single because they didn't want the team. It was a point where I think they could have popped business, and Sting probably wouldn't have gotten hurt, but now, no. So we said, what about if Tully went to rehab - even though he didn't need it - for thirty days and then hire him. That way, if it comes out TBS looks like the white knight babyface because they gave another guy a chance who straightened out his life. It got to the point that if I mentioned Tully Blanchard's name, Herd went into a red-faced rage. We needed those guys at that time. So that was another way he screwed up the company.

Another time, here's a classic comment. I'm talking about the wrestling talent. Herd said one, "You take Bobby Eaton and I'll take Sid Vicious and we'll both have shows and you see who draws the most money." I said, "Yeah, but we'll have the better show and they'll come back to see it again." God he got hot. When he berated me about the interviews and said there was too much talking. I said we were doing a third of the interviews we were doing three years ago. He said things were a lot different now than they were three years ago. I said, "Yeah, three years ago we were all making money."

So then we were going to have the February 1990 ratings sweeps coming up. It had been my idea to have one of those four team elimination deals for the US Title on the Clash. And it was my idea, and I'll admit it, to have The Midnight Express win it to get started in a deal with Pillman and Zenk. And we would run a little angle with Pillman and Zenk and run a little deal and put them over for the belts in the blow off. They lost the point of the whole business. If the babyface wins the first match, the people have no reason to come see it again. Well, they weren't going to put the belts on the Midnight Express and get rid of the four man elimination deal. With the Rock and Roll Express, Ric Flair had to argue and conjoin and waddle to get them a job because Jim Herd wouldn't have those "washed up rehases." We didn't want to make them make them World Tag Team Champions. We wanted to bring them in so we could have some decent matches and maybe teach some of these news guys some stuff.

So they wanted Pillman and Zenk to end the US Title tournament with the belts. We got such a good response, I had been wanting to do something with Pillman and Zenk. I presented it to the whole committee, an angle with them. What I wanted to do was have a title match where we were going after the belts, and when all hope was lost and we were just about beat, I would smack Zenk over the head with the racket and Bobby and Stan would clothesline Pillman across the throat couple times. Then I would set the racket on Pillman's throat and Bobby would give him the vegematic off the top. Then it would be revealed that Brian Pillman, from the age of two until he was 21 had 33 operations on his throat. This was a shoot. They'd reveal the scar on the front of his throat and the raspy voice and that he had a disease of the vocal cords. Then it'd be said we re-injured the scar tissue in the throat. If he took another shot to the throat in the next 4 to 6 weeks until that heals up, his voice could be permanently destroyed. But he was determined, since we had stolen the US tag belts, he was determined that he and Zenk would come back to get those.

He was going to wear a collar as a padding around this throat. Every night during our bouts in the arenas we could jerk off that collar and start hitting him in the throats, people would be going nuts, it would make him a hero. My god, people would be carrying him out on their shoulders. We did that angle on TV and did the interviews and talked about the operations and the whole nine yards. Jim Barnette was around when we did it. But five days later we go to TV and Barnette goes, "What is that Pillman wearing on his throat?" We tell him. He says, "He can't do that, he'll look weak." "Weak? He'll get sympathy." Obviously someone had told him this wasn't going to work. He made us take it all back. He said we could still do the angle, but we couldn't mention the operations, he couldn't wear a collar, and we couldn't mention that his voice would be damaged if he was hit in the throat again. And I will never forget his exact words, "That's just the way it's going to have to be. If it doesn't draw, blame me." Well, it didn't draw and blame him. One-hundred percent.

He complained, "This is a main event angle." If you recall at that time, we had laid out five angles, five top

matches, but unfortunately one of those angles had been Flair and Sting, now it's Flair and Luger. Another one of those angles had been The Steiners against The Andersons, but Arn got hurt and Ole couldn't work without Arn and Jim Herd didn't want Ole in the ring anyway. Well, then they brought in The Wrecking Crew. Then later on when they figured they might draw a couple houses off of Ole, the wanted him back in the ring and, I was proud of him, he told them to stick it. Another of the angles was The Skyscrapers against The Road Warriors, but we had no Skyscraper. There was another one that was screwed up, too. So ours was the only one that had the chance to run with its original participants. But no, this was a main event angle, you can't waste it on these guys. So we had to redo interviews and post-produce the shows to cover them up.

They wouldn't let us win the titles, so we stole the belts. Then the next week I had suggested that Pillman and Zenk come in unscheduled and break some boards over our heads and we run off and they try to steal the belts back. And a couple weeks later they would finally steal the belts back. So then there was deal about no more violence, so we couldn't use boards. So I said, how about soaking spaghetti and hitting them over the head with that. So it was over from that point on. The interference from all parties involved was ridiculous.

KELLER: EARLIER YOU MENTIONED ROBOCOP. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THAT WHOLE SCENARIO?

CORNETTE: Turner Home Entertainment sent a scenario to World Championship Wrestling, this is how you're going to use Robocop to tie in with our movie. It wasn't, "Please do this." It was, "This is how you're going to use Robocop to tie in with our movie." So this horrendous horseshit f'in deal. So at first they wanted Robocop to be Sting's bodyguard. Like Sting, the goddamn future champ needs a bodyguard. Robocop actually was supposed to fling some wrestlers around. Herd came in and he was real adamant and said, "Their heroes aren't going to beat up any of my heroes." The guys was struck with brilliant inspiration for once.

I got on the phone at one of the booking committees once and called Steve Chamberlain once Turner's Home Entertainment Chief. I said, "Steve; Robocop; tryin' to figure out how to use him on our show." They had given us the scenario and had it written week to week. But how to use him on the PPV was up in the air. So I ask Steve what he can actually do? "Well, he can't see too well, he can't fall down, Robocop can't be hurt by rocket launchers or anything, but if he fell, watch out, because he can't get back up. Also be careful, because he can go down steps okay, but not up or he might trip." So I say, "Basically, what you're telling is this near-blind, quadriplegic fuckin' Robot is going to go into the D.C. Armory and he's going to get hit over the head and get mugged. So he can't do anything but walk?" "Nope." "Okay, thanks."

They finally figured out all that shit which was ridiculous horseshit probably lost more fans than anything ever did in the world. When he snatched that rubber door off with that obviously gimmicked padlock and all that other stuff, you could hear so many farts across the country is sounded like the bombing of Bagdad.

So now they've interrupted our program with Pillman and Zenk. It's getting to the point of me having heartburn every night. I was up until 5, 6 in the morning doing TVs. I stay up late anyway. For \$300 extra a week I was making all these extra calls, making all of these extra trips to sit in a hotel for seven hours and do nothing, stay up until 5 or 6 in the morning, and the only thing I ever got from Herd was bitched at. So I was talking to Don Glass in the office that day, "You know, sometime these guys just need a pat on the back to say, 'Hey, you're doing a good job.'" That's when Herd came in and said, "I don't give pats on the back, that's what you get paid for." It is my opinion, as all of this is, that Jim Cornette doesn't know didly squat about one of the first rules of business which is you can't expect people who work for you to do something without any kind of gratitude expressed. The first rule of business is get out of your employees what they're supposed to do and as much as you can, but to make them the most productive, you have to keep them semi-happy.

It seems like it's almost impossible to present any kind of semblance of the wrestling business anymore. After the New York Times article came out, all the guys were so embarrassed and cussing because it said, "We're changing the scripts" and "the wrestlers performances are about half way to where we want them to be." Then the Atlanta Constitution said the same thing. They couldn't understand why everyone was mad even though they just told their home fans in Atlanta that the whole thing was a bunch of shit.

The certified letters they sent out said our contracts have been terminated. They didn't say anything about meeting about renegotiating our new contract. So Bobby calls me and says we've been fired. So I say, let me check on this. I said this is just a new way of telling us we have to start from scratch. So I say let's wait until



BRIAN PILLMAN (By Keller)

after the February pay-per-view because we've got plenty of time and no sense bugging them around that time. So it's March now and we had a great match at the pay-per-view with The Rock & Roll Express. We were having really good matches every night with either them or Pillman and Zenk and we thought certainly there would be no problem.

Right around this time is when Flair quit booking. The reasons he quit were various. For one, he was sick of putting up with all the Horseshit. He and Herd had numerous screaming matches. And then he couldn't get anything done. I'm not saying Flair was the perfect booker, but he had everyone trying to give him a shot in the ribs when his back was turned. Everybody was against everybody else. It got to the point where Ric Flair's only job as booker was to take heat from the boys because of the way things were going. He didn't have power to do anything but take heat. He opened The Wrestling Observer one day and there were three things that he had no idea of. I looked at him and he looked at me and neither of us new about it. Now bear in mind, we got The Observer in the mail. Three more days later we go to the booking meeting and those are the three top items on Herd's agenda that he had typed up. Now when the booker has to find out what's going on in his own company by reading Dave Meltzer's Wrestling Observer and he has time to print it and get it in the mail before he even knows about it, he told Jim Herd he wasn't booker of anything. He didn't have the power to put the belts on the guys he wanted to have the belts. He didn't have the power to use the guys he wanted to use in prominent positions because if you tried to use guys that weren't under contract it was, "No, we're paying these other guys." He didn't have the power to do anything because of all the restraints. So he quit as booker.

So I didn't want to quit my position on the committee because it was time to negotiate contracts and I didn't want to screw things up for me or Bobby or Stan. So we went and had a meeting with Herd. I said I didn't want to do a sales pitch about the Midnight Express but Herd and Barnette said something like, "No, please do. We're human. Maybe we're missing something." I was trying to tell him how Bobby and Stan fulfilled a very important position on the card, one being they always had a good match even if it wasn't the match at that time that was supposed to draw the money. And we could get over and get other guys over. We could teach the younger guys they work with what's going on. Just all-around useful people to have around.

After about 40 or 45 minutes, Herd says, "Well, I'll tell ya' I'm not interested in signing you three as a team. I'm not going to talk about that." So I said, "Why didn't you tell us that 45 minutes ago so we didn't sit here and waste all of our time?" So I tell him I'm not interested in talking about anything unless it's with the team. So we went ahead and left and then figured we'd be done May 15. So I call my wife and tell her we're going to be done May 15. This is just the middle of March now.

They needed Horsemen for this May pay-per-view with Robocop because they actually only had Ric Flair and Arn Anderson healthy and Ole was only managing, talking. I went to Hawaii March 16 through the 25th. One of the things they suggested right before I left is to split Bobby and Stan up. I said, if you wanted to do something like that, it would be a great program. I said we would work into it on TV for seven or eight weeks and then do a split and I'd side with Bobby since Stan's a more natural babyface. Then they could have great matches with each other, run it for three months, and you'd have a heck of a thing for the summer. If it was done right to the point where people bought it, you would have a heck of program. We would be open to that maybe. So I go to Hawaii and they call Bobby and start telling him they want him to be a Horsemen. He said, "Well, talk to Jimmy when he gets back from Hawaii." Well, they hated that because they would always say talk to me. When I get back, Barnette, Wahoo,

whoever, passed word around that Bobby had already said yes.

So the first TV we do is Johnstown, Pennsylvania. They already had on the format that I would do a Louisville Slugger with Flair and Woman. Woman would come out and say, "I want one of the Midnight Express to be a Horsemen." And I'd go, "Oh no, not one of my boys." "Hey, whatever Woman wants, she gets, and I'm Ric Flair and whatever I want I get." The next week I do another Louisville Slugger with them and they say, "I want you to meet the newest Horsemen" and out comes Bobby. I said, "You have to be out of your..." The whole committee, Ross and Wahoo and Kevin and the rest of them. I said, "You introduce a new referee with a bigger angle than that. That's ridiculous." Now they get hot with me.

So Barnette says they need help. They need Horsemen to run from Robocop. I said, "If you need Horsemen, here's an idea. I'm tired. You need Horsemen. Bobby and Stan want to stay together. Why not have Woman lease the contracts of the Midnight Express from me to be the new Horsemen. That way when Arn's healthy, you've got Ric Flair and Arn and The Midnight Express as The Horsemen. Not a bad lineup. Woman can go to the ring with them. I'll just do TV commentary and have a couple months off and I'll be happy. And that way you've got your Horsemen, the Midnight Express stay together, and I've got some time off. You don't have to give them a new contract, you just have give us all the same amount of money for the same amount of time. That's all. Verbal, written, whatever the heck. Everybody's happy. Who do you think would be the fly in the ointment?

The next night we have TV in Canton, Ohio. I walk in. Jim Ross says, we've got a little problem. We even did a little interview that night in Johnstown. Well, Barnette had gone back to Atlanta that night and told Herd and Herd went nuts. And Ross had called Herd and Herd went crazy. "What, make the Midnight Express Horsemen? Why, their contracts run out before the pay-per-view." And Ross told them they'd be happy to stay for the pay-per-view or however long you want. Herd says something like, "That's easy for you to say; that's not your money." So Ross said he gave up. Ross says, "We've tried everything, so you just tell us what you want us to do, Jim Herd, and we'll do it." And Herd goes, "Well, that's a fine attitude for you to have. Throw up your hands and quit."

So I quit the committee and quit the company and said I can't wait to get out of here May 15. "I'm off the committee effective now." I had called my wife the previous night and told her, "I guess we're staying." Ross said to come to the committee meeting the next day and tell him what was on my mind. "I can't tell him what's on my mind. He don't have a mind." If I come to the committee meeting tomorrow, number one, there's going to be a fight. Number two, the only thing I want to see Jim Herd now for is so I can stick my knuckles two inches deep into his eye sockets." So terribly disgusted, we do TV that night, and go to the hotel and I call my wife and tell her we're out of here."

The next day instead of the committee meeting, I go to the spot show. The next day we go to Norfolk, Virginia. Wahoo comes up and tells us we got a contract. "What are you talking about?" Then he says that Herd ranted and raved for 15 minutes about how we can do without them and then said what do you guys think, and he put it to a vote to the committee and the committee voted unanimously to give you a new contract with the same money and the same terms. And me and Stan said at the same time, "Wait a minute, we don't want 'em."

The thing they wanted the three of us to do was they wanted Bobby to be a Horsemen, Stan to be a babyface, and me to do TV commentary. Paul E.'s thing was he wanted to do commentary and he'd manage if he had to. My thing was I liked to do commentary, but I manage first and foremost and if I can't manage, I don't want to do nothing. Now we're sitting there, and I had been so relieved because we were going to leave. I'm still having my heart burn every night because the aggravation was so ridiculous. So I call back my wife and tell her we're going to stay, and she goes, "Oh, no," because she wanted us to go, too. But I couldn't tell Bobby and Stan to turn down a guaranteed contract for that much money. So she resigns to the fact that I'm gonna have to stay in this loony bin.

KELLER: SO WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU HAD TO MEET WITH JIM HERD ABOUT FINALLY RENEWING THE CONTRACTS?

CORNETTE: I called Herd and said we don't want anymore money, our present deal is fine. Since you're gonna give us a contract and obviously it was against your will, I said we just want eight days off a month, that's all. Because all during the time they were trying to get rid of us we were booked 65 out of 70 days. In the month of April I was home five nights and I worked three of those and drove home afterwards. I saw him at TV and he said, "Well, I can't promise ya' that, because then everyone would want it." Well I didn't care what everybody wants, this is only fair. I said, "We've been treated like red headed step children as far as you tryin' run us off. All we want is a

little time off to spend with the family." Well, as it turns out we find out their plan is to go to no Tuesday and Wednesday matches, so that would mean eight days off a month, so fine.

Then Tony Schiavone came in (burp) - you can edit that out. I always loved Tony Schiavone. He's a nice guy. He came in with fresh ideas and vitality and full of things he wanted to do. I said, "Tony, do you know what you have done?" "What?" I said, "In six weeks you're going to hate the wrestling business." Any by-gum if his change in attitude or manner of carrying himself was any indication, I think he beat that. But at this time he was happy and had some say in the booking at this point because there was still the committee. And he said he could get us a couple of days in May off and then the Tuesday and Wednesday's off begin.

KELLER: WHEN DID YOU FINALLY SIGN NEW CONTRACTS? BEFORE MAY 15 (1990) WHEN THEY EXPIRED?

CORNETTE: Yeah. Herd brings us our contracts to Indianapolis the day before they're supposed to expire. At this point I think three or four days earlier they had announced that Ole Anderson was the new booker. Jim Herd six weeks earlier had tried to get Ole Anderson fired. Because Ric Flair had brought Ole in as a road agent kind of consultant. Flair thought Ole could help out because he's been in the business twenty-five years and knows everybody and done everything. At the time, he was on Flair's side as trying to do some right things wrestling-wise. One of the last meetings I went to, Wahoo was there and he and Ole don't get along, and Wahoo was saying Ole was talking bad about the office. So Herd was saying in the meeting in about March the need rid of Ole. I was the one, and this will come back later to haunt me, but I said, "That's the way Ole is, talking bad and insulting people. At the same time, he might be able to teach these younger guys a little bit about what they're supposed to be doin'." So six weeks later he's the booker and Wahoo was gone.

Okay, so we're back on May 14 when Herd brought us our contracts. He said, "Well, I told Ole I had a commitment. So I'm gonna sign ya' now so you're not caught in the transition. He's doin' ya' a big favor. As he hands us our contract he says, "But you know I was against this." So we signed the contracts and he just walked away. So whatever.

KELLER: WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED HAD YOU ACCEPTED THE NEW ROLES SUGGESTED EARLIER?

CORNETTE: If we had taken their advice and I had done color commentary and Bobby had become a Horsemen and Stan had become a babyface, well, six weeks after that Ole jerked me off TV so I would have had no job. They would have been paying me but I wouldn't have anything to do. Six weeks after that they would have had six Horsemen counting Ole because they got Windham back and Sid, so Bobby would have been the "designated jobber." And Stan bein' a babyface, look at the line he would have been standing behind. So in the end, if we had done what they wanted us to do we would have all looked like... dicks.

KELLER: SO HOW DID OLE ANDERSON WORK AS OUT AS BOOKER FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE AT THE BEGINNING?

CORNETTE: Well, next is when Ole made the famous statement, "Well, we're going to go back to 1974." And in some ways, I was all for it, because if you went back to the right things that happened in 1974 it could be the best thing for the business. Now it's gone complete hell in a handbasket and nobody believes it; there's no credibility. I'll get off on that later - my feelings on the state of the business.

So June and July is when we had the Tuesdays and Wednesdays off and we're kind of coastin' along doin' our stuff.

KELLER: WHAT WAS THE NEXT STRAW THE EVENTUALLY LED TO YOU LEAVING WCW?

CORNETTE: Okay, here's a classic example. We wanted to work with the Southern Boys. They told us when the committee was on that we could do a program with them. We put them over in Alabama on TV and had a tremendous response. Then we had some matches with them in June and then in July we did the pay-per-view and people said it was the greatest match they had ever seen. Never worked with them again until October. Not once. All of a sudden, as soon as Ole took over, we disappeared. Out of twelve weeks and sixty shows, we were only at six tapings and only had six matches on TV. I had no interviews except for the Louisville Slugger which I wanted to do live in the ring, but instead it was in the broom closet. So basically I'm a non-presence and the boys have disappeared and we're the US Tag Team Champions. We had non-title matches everywhere; I think we defended the belts five times before we lost them. We got non-title matches in the houses so we could do the job.

As a matter of fact, the first thing Ole said to me at a TV taping in Gainesville after he got the booker about doing

a program, he basically wanted to do a deal where they turned on me and try to break us up again. I said, "Ole, nobody's going to believe that." And I don't think the fans would have. And besides that, we had the Southern Boys we could work with, not to mention The Steiners. He said we were doing too much entertaining stuff.

KELLER: HOW DARE YOU!

CORNETTE: I said the reason we've been doing so much entertaining stuff is because we haven't had a chance to do any programs or any angles in six months to get any heat. So we had to do something to get a response out of the people. If you allow us to do an angle and get some heat, then we will work seriously and we will do that like we used to. He says, "Well, okay, we'll think about it."

Then we disappeared, we weren't on TV, we never had title matches. All of last summer continued like that. Then in August at the Meadowlands at 7:15 that night they said they wanted us to drop the belts to The Steiners. And Ronnie West, who I've known for a long time, didn't even come to ask me; he made Kevin Sullivan, who's a friend of mine, come and ask me.

And it wasn't that we wouldn't drop the belts. I mean, we've never refused to do a job. The point is, ever since I got in the business, and Bobby and Stan are the same way, they would have the courtesy to tell you, "Okay, next week we want you to drop the belts to these guys." Either we want to do an angle with you and it will be good or else we want to get these guys over and flatten you out or whatever, but they tell you first. That kind of ticked me off. Ronnie West told me, "The decision was just made two days ago." Well, this is America, there's phones all over the place. I said I thought it was horseshit that we've never been able to do an angle with these belts and now you're takin' them from us, but we'll do it. So we had a real good match with The Steiners and we put the belts on them. They had harder time talkin' The Steiners into takin' the things than talkin' us out of them. The Steiners didn't want to lug the big sonovabitches around. They get paid the same regardless.

KELLER: WITHOUT THE U.S. BELTS, DID ANYTHING CHANGE?

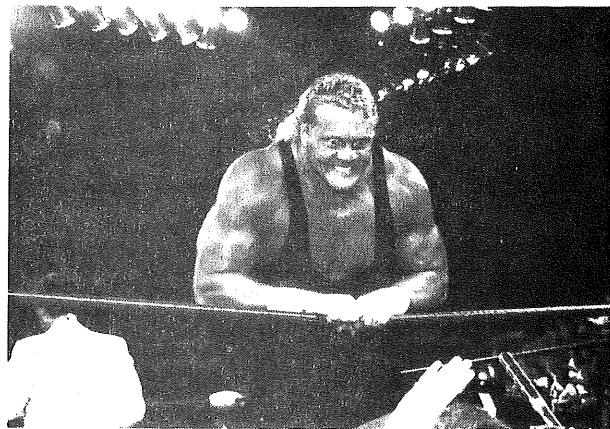
CORNETTE: Well then, in September we were booked in a bunch of singles matches. Classic example: Columbia, South Carolina, first match was Stan against The Juicer and second match was Bobby against Alan Iron Eagle. Now I think we were booked twenty days in September and seven of those were singles matches. What sense does that make? For a tag team to be broken up into singles isn't always bad, but in our case it totally defeats the purpose of our gimmick which is usually going out and having the best match of the night and entertaining the people. Why take away the people's chance to see a good match for the sake of two so-so singles matches?

Then there was a Clash in September and we weren't on that. We continued to be pretty well non-existent on TV. Then we get the line-up for the October pay-per-view and we're on the opening match against the Rock and Roll Express. Now we will wrestle Ricky Morton and Robert Gibson anytime, anyplace, anywhere because we've done better with them than anyone else in the history of the business. The point is, it's been done on pay-per-view, it been done on free TV, it's been done to death. And at the same time, the opening match? And to be followed by four or five stinkers? I thought that was just another hint to us, right?

KELLER: THEN THE GAUNTLET CONTROVERSY TOOK PLACE?

CORNETTE: Right. They have Bobby run the gauntlet in September. So in Marietta, Georgia one night out of 22 matches, we had five of them. And here's what our gripe has always been. Stan is especially pissed because they've always treated him like tomorrow's garbage. But at the same time they didn't really want us, they always knew that Bobby is tremendous and would work hard no matter what they do or say. So they make him work the most, go the longest, take the most bumps, take the most punishment to his body, and never show appreciation. Jim Herd once said this. I said in the office one time, "Ya' know sometimes if a guy gets a pat on the back or somethin' when he does something right it helps out as far as employee relations." He said, "Ahhh, I don't believe in pats on the back, that's what pay checks are for." So you can obviously see he's had a long, illustrious career dealing with people.

But anyway, so they have Bobby run the gauntlet. So first he works with Tracy Smothers. Good match. Then he goes out and works twenty minutes with Ricky Morton. Better match. Then he goes out and works a dark match with The Steiners for the US Tag Titles. Then he goes back out and works a match with Sid Vicious. Now, I don't care, Ray Charles could see that was going to be a stinker because Sid ain't gonna sell for nobody but Sting or Luger. And everybody at the same time knows that Bobby's going to get beat when you put him up against the number one singles guy supposedly going to challenge for the World Title. So the match was a forgone conclusion as to what was going to happen.



SID VICIOUS (By Keller)

It didn't help get Sid any heat because we're both heels and we've got more heat than he does. He don't know how to get any and don't want any, to be truthful; he wants to be a babyface. It just made Bobby look like a real complete lookin' jerk to get beat in three minutes and it didn't entertain the fans. And Sid wouldn't even sell for him after Bobby went twenty minutes with Ric Flair, after he's beatin' up The Road Warriors and Dusty Rhodes and Bill Watts and on down the line. It makes a farce completely out of the whole business. And this was eighteenth out of twenty-four matches on a TV taping night. About this point the people would rather see their mother hooked up to a machine than see another wrestling match. The fans started booing the match and that's one way to get to Bobby. For him not to have a good match, he really feels bad about that. But what could he do. And the way it was set up, when Ole gave the finish, it wasn't even constructed for it to be competitive in my opinion. That's my opinion. All of this is my opinion.

KELLER: DID YOU RESPOND TO THIS APPARENT UNFAIR TREATMENT?

CORNETTE: Well, I got hot, obviously. Here's a guy that's busted his ass to get this concept over and what do they do for him but make him look like a jerk. So I called Herd the next day and asked him to buy our contracts out. Because I said, "Look, the company's putting us in singles matches. We've been on TV eight out of the last sixteen weeks and done more jobs in those appearances than wins. We do jobs at the house shows. We haven't done an angle in six months. You wouldn't let us do anything with the belts. We're not on the Clash and the opening match of the next pay-per-view. A \$150 part time guy with no manager could do the same thing we're doin' and save you a lot of trans'. I said to knock 20 percent of our salaries off the board and save the trans' and buy us out and we'll leave. Herd says, "Ahhh, I'm not gonna' buy ya' out. If you wanna' leave, you can." I respond, "Well, we want to stay and get our money we were promised. It's not our fault you don't know how to use us." So that's where I stood with him.

So that was the last meaningful conversation I had with Jim Herd... no, wait a second. I take that back. I had more conversations about when they fined Bobby and Stan. Here's this deal. This was back in early August, but I'm not sure exactly when. We had been on TV 50 percent of the time. On a Friday night we were in Dallas, Texas and Kevin Sullivan was the road agent. I asked Kevin if we were on TV Monday. He said he had the interview list and I was supposed to be there. See, I would have to go every week to do a two minute Louisville Slugger. So I was driving four, five hundred miles every Monday just to do a two minutes and maybe six thirty second promos and then I'd leave. Got old real quick, real quick. I mean, this was stuff I could have phoned in, practically. I wanted the Louisville Slugger cancelled just so I would have to make the drive. I asked Jim Ross, and I've always gotten along good with Jim. Jim wants to do what right but he has an easier time working inside the corporate world than any of us. That's why he is takin' heat in the past. He'll try to give these people what they want and still try to do what he wants. So I say, "Jim, please, cancel the Louisville Slugger. I don't want to come out and do this every Monday." Jim says, "Well, that's the only part of these shows at this point we can plug." I respond, "Well, it's not my fault."

So where was I, Wade?

KELLER: SOMETHING ABOUT BOBBY AND STAN BEING FINED.

CORNETTE: Yeah, the fines. At any rate, since Bobby and Stan are on TV 50 percent of the time, I asked Kevin, "Are we on TV?" Kevin only had the interview list, but not the talent list. So I agreed to check with him tomorrow. So the next night I check with him and he still doesn't have

the list. I tell him we're off tomorrow, Sunday, everybody else is in the Omni - where we hadn't been since April - and so I called Jody Hamilton at home because he lives there in Atlanta; this was early afternoon. Whoever answered the phone said he wasn't home but he would be dropping back before the show. I gave the message for him to call before the show or after and tell us if we were scheduled for TV and I would be in all day, which I was, and I had a machine. Turns out the next day that he didn't get the message. Well, anyway, it turns out the next night I have to leave at 10:00 in the morning and get down to Gainsville. So I'm assuming that Bobby and Stan are going to call and find out at the office because if they have to be there at 4:00 they've got to leave at 12:30 or 1:00. So when I get there I see that they're down to work twice. I tell Ronnie West if they didn't call the office and nobody called them, they aren't going to be here because we've been trying unsuccessfully to find out all weekend. Well, Ole has a shit-fit and gives it to me for thirty minutes. This is not to say that it's right, but there a lot of other guys who were missing TV's or missing shots. Well, his line in response to that was, "Well, there's some people you expect more out of."

You could go over the records since July of 1985 and I would say Bobby Eaton has missed - and this is not counting injuries - Bobby's missed maybe four matches in five years. Stan, except for Florida, I'm gonna say maybe the same. And for me, the same where we didn't call in sick or make an arrangement for the miss. Bobby specifically is the most loyal employee anyone has ever had. Bobby missed as many matches in the NWA in five years that Sid Vicious missed in maybe three weeks because of his softball league. So Ole's givin' me thirty minutes worth of shit. I said, "Ole, I'm here." But there wasn't anyone else to yell at. So they don't show up and he's hot.

The next day I get the story from Bobby. He called the office that morning on behalf of him and Stan. There's a receptionist at the office who is rude to everyone who works there. Bobby called her and she said, "Everyone's at a meeting." He goes, "I need to know if whether me and Stan are on TV." She said she'll have somebody call him. He's sitting by the phone until 1:30 and nobody calls. Well he's got to get on with his day. They called him at 3:30 when I got there and told them he didn't know but he was gone. So at any rate, a couple weeks later the checks come and they both got fined \$500 a piece for missing that TV. So Bobby calls Herd and Herd is bad about returning Bobby's calls. So I had to call him and finally he returned my call and I got in an argument with him. I told him what happened and he acted like he didn't believe me. I said, "Are you telling me I'm lying?" "Well, somebody's lying around here." "Well, it ain't me. And if Bobby tells me the sun ain't comin' up tomorrow, I'm gonna go out and buy flashlights. So I want you check into this."

Then we go into Marietta one day for TV and Herd's there and he grabs Bobby by the arm and says, "You better talk to Ole about your fine," and walks out the door. So he went to talk to Ole. And when you talk to Ole, you talk at Ole and Ole talks at you. We go into a monologue for about thirty minutes. Well we got no where. But this was the first time where he does this deal where I'm talkin' to him on behalf of the boys. He turns his back on me and he's talkin' back to them. I'm talkin' to him and he's talkin' to them. It got me hot then. And then that's when he started doing this thing with Sid Vicious where he ran in on our match. I said, "Why are we doin' this Ole?" And he said, "Well, we could do something down the line or it could just be one of those things that happens."

So then the same day we have an argument with him he wants Bobby to do an interview by himself talking about, "Hey, Sid Vicious, you may beat me up, but I've been beat up a thousand times and you'll have to beat me up every time you see me." He wanted Bobby to be like the common man. (Singing) Am-er-i-can Dream! So I'm goin', great, he wants Bobby singly to be a babyface and as team we're still heels. How is this going to help us get any heat. So he does an interview to please Ole and they don't do anything more with it for two weeks. They had me do a Louisville Slugger with Sid saying he's going to be the next World Heavyweight Champion and then later on when we run the gauntlet thing we're mad at him again.

KELLER: DID THEY EVER GET REIMBURSED?

CORNETTE: They got the fines back (in December). They still owed Bobby \$250 for March. The whole tone of our relationship with World Championship Wrestling - well, if it had been one of these things, or two of these things, or a few of these things, it wouldn't have been a problem because we have worked for dickheads before. You have to put up with shit in the wrestling business and we're not trying to be crybabies. But it was something different almost everytime we turned around that made us so aggravated when you were tryin' to do your best and all you could. It was like a slap in the face. I told Herd that. They fined Bobby \$250 in March for being 30 minutes late for the TV taping. The reason he was late was because he was riding with me. I was on the booking committee and I

went to the woman's house who makes stuff here in Charlotte to pick up masks for The Destruction Crew to be The Wrecking Crew and we got there thirty minutes late. I had the power to tell him not to come at all, I was on the committee for heavens sake. We're thirty minutes late, they don't fine me and they fine Bobby \$250. So he complains to Barnette and he still ain't got it.

KELLER: YOU MENTIONED BEING ON THE BOOKING COMMITTEE. DID YOU ENJOY THAT?

CORNETTE: I don't think that I did anything more than other people could do on the booking committee, but the fact is, I was the one doing it. I love the wrestling business. I want to see the wrestling business succeed. I worked as hard as I could to do that. All that I got was stomach problems. So much aggravation that I ended up in the hospital. \$300 extra a week? I don't need that money. It didn't even cover my phone bill. I got on the booking committee in August, my (company) phone card came in March just in time to give it back. So it was not for money. I was doing it because I wanted to see the wrestling business succeed. If anything, it was not for personal glory, because if anything it made Jim Herd madder when The Midnight Express and Jim Cornette were on TV while I was on the committee. By the same token, Bobby and Stan, anxious to help me out if possible, we had Bobby do two jobs for Flair on TV and everybody should because he's the champ and he's the greatest. We had them do other things on TV that weren't exactly flattering because I thought it would make exciting TV. So we've never obviously shied away from doing a job. But the more compliments and acclaim we take from people, the more we try to do, the more horseshit we have to take in the long run.

KELLER: DO YOU BUY INTO THE THEORY THAT THE BETTER WORKER THE MORE JOBS THEY CAN DO AND DO YOU THINK THAT'S FAIR?

CORNETTE: Okay, here's the thing. If you give somebody credibility, then they can get beat from now until doomsday if you allow them to keep their credibility. In other words, when we were in Louisiana, the people thought that Bobby Eaton and Dennis Condrey were the greatest tag team in the world. They hated them. They despised us. I still get served with papers everytime I go to that territory. I'm not kiddin', from fights and lawsuits and shit. I mean, we had a tremendous amount of heat. Bill Watts would allow his heels to get heat on television. Now he put us over at the houses a lot, but we did jobs for every new team that came in. After we had been there three months for every new team that came in, sometimes on TV and sometimes at the houses, he would always give you something back. I've been told Eddie Graham said the same thing, although I was not lucky enough to have a working relationship with him, he's one of the greatest wrestling minds of all time, he said if you take something away you've got to give something back. Some guys, you can give them everything in the world, and they do one job and they're finished. But if somebody can work, you can do that.

KELLER: FOR EXAMPLE, LEX LUGER HAD ENOUGH CREDIBILITY TO DO THE CLEAN JOB TO HANSEN. LUGER WAS STILL OVER WITH THE FANS AND HE GAINED SYMPATHY BY DOING THE JOB.

CORNETTE: See, that's what we've gotten away from in this business is babyfaces getting any kind of sympathy. But the inner-connected problem is babyfaces can't get any kind of sympathy because everybody's smart to the business and they know it's a show.

We have been beat to death and not allowed to do anything to get any heat. Just before we left, Jim Ross had taken a more creative input into the TBS shows and he wanted to use us to do some stuff, which I was all for because it makes the time here more palatable and that's why we started to do a couple more things. But at this point, I appreciate it, but it wasn't enough for me to say all this shit is worth my time again. The point I'm trying to get across is my leaving wasn't one thing, two things, or three things. It was all this stuff time after time and made me so aggravated. When you knew you were doing your best and it seemed like they had the attitude you're tryin' to stick it to 'em; I don't know what they thing - I don't know if they think. They give people the impression that they don't give a shit and Jim Herd's opinion that he expressed, "that's what your paycheck is for," in a business like this where guys are bustin' their ass, riskin' their neck, getting dropped on their head, you've got to think that the people you're working for appreciate what you're doin'. Now a lot of promoters have been gruff and also in the old days you were working to try to draw money every week. You were working to try to make more money for yourself, but now with contracts or weekly deals there's not somethin' in a big crowd for you. Most of the people working for World Championship Wrestling, most of the wrestlers, don't feel that anything they do has any bearing on whether they draw or not because there's so many other problems.

In Mid-South, when we did the angle with Bill Watts, if

we did it right, we were going to sell-out. It we did it wrong, it would mean a tremendous amount of money we weren't going to make. But now there's so many problems connected with running shows in this company, now if you do the greatest angle in the world, it will be buried between Norman's Corner and Horseshit Hall. One angle or two or three well done can't draw anymore because they don't know we're comin'. Or if they do, they're not watching the TVs. And if they are, there's seventeen of them. They might not be watching the right one.

KELLER: BACK TO YOUR FEUD WITH THE DYAMIC DUDES. DID THAT TURN PUT YOU IN POSITION FOR MAIN EVENTS?

CORNETTE: Well, here was my thinking and it didn't work like I wanted it to. If I had had my way, I would have had us switch against a babyface team that was over. But they told me basically who was available. I wanted The Steiners, who weren't available, so it came down to The Dudes who had not had a chance yet to get over. So I thought the people are going to see this coming if we have any kind of argument or whatever. They're expecting us to switch any day. The only way we can mess their minds up is if they don't know where I'm goin'. Maybe then they will get interested enough to watch this thing, so even if we don't get a ton of a heat out of it, at least it will get some interest and be something to add to the shows. It did have tremendous interest because it seemed like that's all the people were talking about, what was the story behind the girl, Stan, and Johnny, and everything. Like I said earlier, the only thing that I didn't realize is how popular we were as far as being babyfaces. The people hated The Dudes. They would not give The Dudes a chance. Down south we could work a match and switch the people; up north, they were cooked. It was like wrestling against the tide. Every match we had with them we first had to turn the people from us to them and then we could start at point zero. By the time the match was over, we were where we should have been at point zero. So that just didn't work. It wasn't The Dudes fault. They worker hard. Shane Douglas worked with a broken arm. It wasn't that they weren't working, the people just didn't like them because they hadn't ever gotten over and they were working an institution; you know, some people say we ought to be in one. At least it was something to have us do some juicy stuff. Then I thought the thing with Pillman and Zenk could have been a big deal and they slice that in the blink of an eye. And it's been downhill ever since.

KELLER: SO LEADING BACK TO THE PAY-PER-VIEW, HALLOWEEN HAVOC, AFTER THE FINING INCIDENT AND ALL THAT STUFF, WHAT HAPPENED?

CORNETTE: Okay, it's late September, so Jim Ross calls me and he says, "We need to do something with the Giant. We've spent a lot of money on the giant, do you guys think you can get anything out of it." I said sure, because Bobby as a matter of fact, asked them when he first heard of the guy, if he could fly to Atlanta to work out with the guy. He took it as sort of personal challenge to teach a guy bigger than Andre the Giant who had never seen a wrestling match how to work. They ended up sending the giant to Florida, but Bobby offered. We can get whatever there is to be got, but we can't just have the giant sticking out like a spare prick at the wedding. I said what are The Southern Boys doing and he said nothing in particular. So I wanted to start something on TV with us and The Southern Boys because we've been wanting to work with each other and have some good matches. There's never been an Armstrong who couldn't work. I think Brad's tremendous and one these days I think Steve might be a little better. I think Bob was at one time very good, tremendously over, and could talk like crazy. Then there's Scott and Brian. And Tracy is the greatest guy in the world and Stan helped train him, so I loved these guys. So I said, how about we start something with these guys on TV, we go to the Clash in November and have a match. But at the end of the show and they want a six man tag for Starrcade. And we come out and sign the contract thinking it is for The Southern Boys and Bob. So we say, "We can't wait to kick that 100 year old man." They say, "Hey, Bob ain't our partner. Look behind you, there's our partner." I turn around; I see the Giant; I faint.

So all during the intervening weeks before Starrcade we're doing the thing where I come up with - well, Ross wanted to do the Mexican theme even though Giant's not Mexican, let's take a little artistic licence here - so we'd throw hot sauce in the eyes and everything. So I said, hey, let's get a midget that speaks Spanish. I bring him out next to this pot and claim he's El Gigante's brother. They were all like that until he started drinking this Argentinian Witch Doctor Voo Doo Juice which I've got the secret recipe for and I'm mixin' it up and by the time the big match comes, I'm gonna be 7'4" and Bobby's gonna be 7'5" and Stan's gonna be 7'7". We're gonna kick this guy's ass. I say, "Gordon Solie come in here. They tell me you'll drink everything. Take a sip of this shit." "Goddamn it's hot." He's getting a fire hose down his neck. Then you go out and throw the sauce in one of their



JIM CORNETTE (By Keller)

eyes and all that leading up to the match at Starrcade. Then the Giant slams me, slaps me, beat me up. So Ross says it sounds good, we can work with some of that stuff there. This way at the Clash we shoot the angle in front of our big audience and do the blow-off when they have to pay. Seems to make sense.

So I get to TV the next week. Ole has booked me in six-man tags starting November 12 through the first week of December every night with Ricky Morton, Tommy Rich, and The Giant, and then The Southern Boys and The Giant, with everybody. Besides the fact that I said I'd work with the Giant once, I didn't say thirty days straight, I said I'd take one slam, not thirty. You're giving the dag gum match away across the country before the pay-per-view. And besides that, they didn't ask me if I'd work every night. I've got two bad knees, both of which I have hurt doing bullshit for them, jumpin' off the scaffold, that was for Jimmy Crockett. The last time I had to work regularly was at the Bash in '88 in the Bunkhouse matches with The Fantastics which I loved. I've never had more fun in my life, but Dusty gave me three months notice, so I lost thirty pounds and worked my legs out. But now I'm not in the shape to work every night. I'm too heavy, I'm not motivated, and I just don't feel like it.

So anyway, I was pissed off about that, working thirty days with one day off only because the company wasn't running anything. Then I found out they didn't even think The Giant was going to be there for Starrcade. He's going back to Argentina. And then the next week he's not. So anyway, they booked the six-man for the Clash November 20. So we started the program with The Southern Boys Saturday night, October 27. When you have a six man with the manager in the ring, who's gonna get beat in that combination? Then that's the end of it. So it would be a three week program and waste everything. So that was horseshit.

KELLER: WHAT HAPPENED WHEN YOU ARRIVED AT HALLOWEEN HAVOC IN CHICAGO?

CORNETTE: We get to where they're going to tell us our finishes. Well, I'm figuring since we're working with a substitute team and we're supposed to be doing an angle with The Southern Boys, maybe we'll go over and get a little heat. And I knew we were supposed to go out and cause The Southern Boys to lose. Well, Ole tells us we want to get Morton and Rich over. I've known Tommy Rich since 1975 and I'd do anything for Ricky Morton. He told me The Southern Boys are going to come out. That's okay, since I leave with the heat because I interfere second. Then Ole says we want to get into this little chase scene and we want to end up with The Southern Boys breaking a pumpkin over your head. I say, "What?" He says, "Well, not actually break it. We're gonna have a hole cut out of it." What they wanted to do is have me running around with a Jack-O-Lantern bumping into things, I guess. I thought he was kidding; I really did. I said, "Ole, I'm not gonna do that." Ole says it came all the way from the top, Mr. H, Jim Herd. I say, "Well, you can tell Mr. Herd to take his fuckin' pumpkin and stick it up is fuckin' ass." And that's my exact quote in front of fifteen people. "I don't know why I'm tryin' to worry about doing things right. You've got Gunther Gable Williams ring announcing, you've

(concluded on next page)

got the Phantom of the Opera hosting the show, Al Capone doing the play-by-play, Dracula doing the color, the Good Witch doing the interviews, you've got your wrestlers dressed like pumpkins and jesters fighting each other with silly string, you've got David Copperfield out there wanting to make the World Champion disappear, why am I worried about doing things the right way, but I am." He says, "It's just entertainment." I say, "You yanked me off TV six months ago because I was too entertaining, that was your exact words, 'You're too entertaining, you're too funny' so why should I start entertaining them now?"

Then he gets me, you see, because Ole's got this thing about Tennessee. He's even done dressing room dissertations about this before. He's always hated the people from Tennessee, saying it's a bunch of horseshit, nobody could work there, and that the people in the Carolinas took pride in what they were doing and tried to be athletes and all that stuff. So he said, "That's just something Nick Gulas would have done." This is where I got him, I said, "No, Nick Gulas drew money." So then he's hot. Then he says we need to make The Southern Boys look good some kind of way. And I say, "Don't worry, we will." So I call The Southern Boys over to the side and say, here is exactly what we're going to do. They said, "Are you kidding?" I said, "No, they want to take heat off of me, and they don't want us to do any kind of a program in a standard accepted way." I say, "Chase me, grab me - the costume had to go back to the costume place - so stomp my hat, rip my clothes off, slam me, spank me, and drop me out of the ring." And that's exactly what they did. What's the use, so we might as well try to entertain the people, right? And Herd has always said, and this is an exact quote, "I'm sick and tired of hearing about the way things used to be done and that's the way we've always done things. We're going to have to get out of this, things are a lot different." I say, "Yeah, we used to draw money. How would you know if the traditional things work, the company's never done anything traditional." Just because Vince hasn't been traditional and has made money doesn't mean we have to imitate him. He doesn't even promote wrestling, he promotes 'sports entertainment.' He's made money these past few years by default. Not that he wouldn't have made money if somebody else was doing something different. Nobody's done anything different to get the fans that he don't get.

And, as we covered in an earlier segment of this interview, three days after Havoc I had another conflict with Ole so Stan and I walked out. ***

(SUPREMACY continued from page 35)

best American bout on TV was the Midnight Express vs. Southern Boys from the July 7 Bash. The best I have seen in person was the fantastic arena brawl between Cactus Jack and Eddie Gilbert on November 11 in New Jersey. But when I started listing Japanese bouts that were better than both of these, I stopped at ten. The bouts I consider as superior are as follows:

Riger vs. Sano (1/31), Tenryu/Tiger Mask vs. Choshu/Takano (2/10), Tsuruta vs. Misawa (6/8 and again on 9/1), Kikuchi/Malenko vs. Fulton/Rogers (9/1), Hase vs. Muto (9/14), Riger vs. Benoit (11/1), Sasaki/Hase vs. Chono/Muto (11/1), Kawada vs. Kobashi (6/30), and Manami Toyoda vs. Akira Hokuta (8/19).

I then called six different people whose names are fairly well known as knowledgeable fans and asked for their opinion as to whether I was undervaluing these or any other American bouts. None of the six could come up with another better American bout that deserved listing in the top ten. One person even went as far as to mention several other Japanese bouts that I had ignored that he claimed were even better. Nobody included the American bouts in the top ten. While this is far from a scientific survey, it does demonstrate that many knowledgeable fans who see both styles extensively, can see the the athletic superiority of the Japanese wrestling product.

Finally, I hope that nobody accuses this article or myself of being anti-American or a putdown of American wrestling. Every year I attend many cards, most of which are WCW shows. I have even paid to see Titan's cartoons on rare occasions when I should have known better. Recently, John Muse and I drove 1200 miles round trip to see two shows held in high school gyms and there was not an Asian on the card. I buy all the PPV shows and have hundreds of hours of very good American wrestling on videotape. Wrestlers like Flair, Funk, Steamboat, and Owen Hart are among my favorites. But to ignore the current status of Japanese wrestling because of some misguided sense of nationalism - or even worse - racism, is a denial of the truth.

If you are a serious fan, but have not yet been exposed to Japanese wrestling, you owe it to yourself to get a hold on some tapes. Many people around the country do a brisk business producing high quality four to six hour tapes. Among those I would recommend are Steve Munari of St. Louis and Jeff Lynch of Pittsburgh. It will be some of the best money you will ever spend. Watch the Japanese product. Compare it to American wrestling. Then, based on the facts, you can make an intelligent evaluation. ***

(VACHON continued from page 26)

VACHON: I first met him in the 1948 Olympics.
BOWDREN: THERE SURE WERE A LOT OF GUYS IN THE 1948 OLYMPICS. YOU, VERNE, KARL GOTCH...

VACHON: That's true. Verne Gagne was very much like Karl Gotch. But Verne saw pro wrestling and adapted and then made a fortune from it. He adjusted to what Karl Gotch didn't.

BOWDREN: WELL LET ME ASK YOU THIS. YOU SAID THAT BACK IN 1982 VERNE COULD HAVE BROKEN OUT, BUT DIDN'T. A LOT OF PEOPLE THINK THAT VERNE GAGNE'S FAILURES CAN BE ATTRIBUTED ONLY TO VERNE GAGNE.

VACHON: Well, I suppose in a way. Verne could see the change coming with the cable TV from New York, Texas, and Atlanta but he just couldn't change.

BOWDREN: DID VERNE KEEP HIMSELF ON TOP FOR TOO LONG IN THE SENSE THAT HE WENT INTO THE 1980'S AS WORLD CHAMPION?

VACHON: I don't think that had anything to do with it. Verne's biggest problem was that he couldn't change with the times. He was satisfied with having his piece of the pie.

BOWDREN: HE COULDN'T SEE THE BIG PICTURE?

VACHON: He couldn't see the big picture like Vince McMahon could. He was more concerned with protecting his own territory.

BOWDREN: WAS HE FAIR WITH YOU?

VACHON: He was pretty fair. I think he was good for the business and for the wrestlers.

BOWDREN: A FINAL QUESTION. LOOKING BACK OVER YOUR CAREER, YOU TALK ABOUT HOW DON OWEN GAVE YOU THE NAME, "MAD DOG." WERE YOU A GOOD WRESTLER WITH A GIMMICK OR WERE YOU STRICTLY A GIMMICK PERFORMER?

VACHON: I like to think I was a good wrestler. I don't really think I had a quote, gimmick, unquote. I had a name hung on me. I had the bald head, the teeth missing, and the gravelly voice. It sort of fit me. I realized a long time ago it's a "dog eat dog world" and only a "Mad Dog" can survive in it (laughs). ***

(TOP TENS continued from page 24)

JOHN RIORDAN'S TOP TEN WORST TAG TEAMS:

- 10) Junkyard Dog & El Gigante
- 9) Motor City Madman
- 8) Powers of Pain
- 7) Skyscrapers
- 6) Rhythm & Snooze
- 5) Sheepwackers
- 4) Undertakers
- 3) State Patrol
- 2) Ring Lords
- 1) Master Blasters

JOHN RIORDAN'S TOP TEN "WHO NEEDS DIGNITY I TOOK VINCE'S MONEY:

- 10) Wayne "Elvis Imitator 510,000,000" Ferris
- 9) Jake "I Cannot Wrestle So I Need A Snake To Get A Push" Roberts
- 8) Terry "Red Rooster" Taylor
- 7) Dusty "Son of a Plumber" Rhodes
- 6) Koko "Birdman" Ware
- 5) Paul "I Do Jobs" Diamond
- 4) Davey "Roids, Bo Derek" Smith
- 3) Akeem
- 2) Slick "I'm No Black Pimp" (Yeah, right)
- 1) Tony "Saba Simba" Atlas

JEFFREY COHEN'S TOP TEN WWF VIDEO TAPES:

- 10) The Bushwackers Babysitting Guide
- 9) George Steele Reads "Hamlet"
- 8) Dusty Rhodes' American Dream Workout
- 7) Vince Does New Haven (8 mm)
- 6) Three Macho Men and a Little Sapphire
- 5) Jimmy Snuka's Disco Zen Lesson
- 4) Best of the WWF Event Center: Vol. 5
- 3) Andre the Giant vs. Jushin Riger: Highlights
- 2) Lord Alfred Hayes: The Early Days
- 1) Hulk and Oprah: A Love Story

JEFFREY COHEN'S TOP TEN THINGS TO LIKE ABOUT OLE ANDERSON:

- 10) First Name Easy To Remember
- 9) Hasn't Started A Knife Fight In Six Years
- 8) No Noogies For Women
- 7) Is Kind To All Animals, Except Roosters
- 6) Welcomes Women Into The Locker Room
- 5) One Hell of a Whittler
- 4) Fond of Carmen Miranda
- 3) Will Not Necessarily Run You Over In The Parking Lot
- 2) Bails Gordon Solie Out of the Drunk Tank.
- 1) He Will Not Pick Your Nose, Even If You Beg.

1991 PREDICTIONS

By: The Readers

CHRIS ZAVISA:

- *Dustin Rhodes will win the NWA TV Title.
- *The March New Japan/WCW card will be the best of the year.
- *The Steiners will break up as a tag team and feud.
- *Wrestlemania fails to sellout in L.A.
- *Misawa wins All-Japan Titles and becomes the promotions biggest star.
- *Owen Hart gives four different starting dates to WCW but still never wrestle for them.
- *Kikuchi wins the All-Japan Jr. Title and gets major recognition for his vast talents.
- *Rockers briefly leave Titan, but return before the year's end.
- *Jim Cornette and Stan Lane leave Global and return to WCW.
- *Ultimate Warrior turns heel and loses the WWF Title.

IAN GOODWIN:

Ric Flair will regain the title at the Meadowlands in January. It will be a short lived reign, however. Sting will finally succeed, given the right exposure and opponents. Finally, Luger will win the WCW Title, but at the expense of a heel turn. Steiners will stay with WCW and unify their tag belts. Slaughter will defeat the Warrior at Rumble, but lose to Hogan at Wrestlemania. With Hogan as champ, WWF gates will increase, as will all of wrestling's attendance. The UWF will succeed in the Northeast. After initial problems, Global will do healthy business with Steamboat at Champ. WCW talent additions will include Cactus Jack, Konan, Owen Hart, The Rockers, Jim Cornette, and Stan Lane. Fortunately, Von Erich will head back to Texas. DiBiase will be reworked with the I-C belt somewhere down the road. The WCW/New-Japan card will be a major success and will hurt Wrestlemania.

CHRIS ELSBURY:

Hogan and Warrior will team until Hogan is attacked by The Undertaker. Hogan is 'injured,' but challenges Undertaker to a match at Wrestlemania VII. While Hogan is out, Piper attacks Warrior because he has hogged the action in their tag match with Undertaker and Ted DiBiase. Piper calls upon his most irritating heelish mannerisms in challenging Warrior to a main event at Wrestlemania VII.

Piper wins the strap in a screw job finish where he has his feet on the ropes. Hogan beats The Undertaker after a lariat. Perfect feuds with Bret Hart for the I-C Title while the Nasty Boys feud with The Rockers for the tag straps. Piper ends up losing the belt to Hogan at Summerslam and that way, Hogan and Warrior both stay faces.

In WCW, I predict they will slowly fall down the tube. Finally, Ted Turner comes to his senses and hires Jeff Bowdren as booker. Their show in Japan will be a good success and The Steiners become the biggest hit in Japan since Brody.

The GWF will start off very well. Owen Hart wins their Title and he has Cornette as his manager. Cactus Jack finally is crippled after taking one elbow drop on the concrete too many. Eaton and Lane hold the tag belts with the top contenders being Rice and Dukes, Can-Am Express, and The Shepherders.

On the newsletter scene, TU Rasslin' Riot becomes the hot new bulletin as Brian Tramel finally has a good match in which he is allowed to blade. But his happiness is short lived when Lawler 'shoot kicks' him before saying, "Now who is the most unimproved."

JACK LEPISTO:

*The Legion of Doom will become the next WWF Tag Team Champs.

*The main event at Wrestlemania VII will be Ultimate Warrior vs. Hulk Hogan.

*Newcomers to WCW will be Buzz Sawyer, Brett Sawyer, Ricky Steamboat, Larry Cameron, and Matt Borne.

*Sting will lose the WCW Title to either Ric Flair or Lex Luger.

*The Steiners biggest rivalry will be Muta & Saito through the year.

*The Nasty Boys will enter the WWF to restart their feud with The Rockers.

*Those who will leave the WWF will be Jake Robert, The Barbarian, Haku, Dusty Rhodes, Dustin Rhodes, and Dino Bravo.

RICH DANIELS

*Terry Funk returns to national spotlight.

*Rick Steamboat becomes new Global Champ.

*Joe Pedicino will be successful.

*Flair's seventh reign begins.

*Hogan signs with WGN and become the six million dollar man.

*Great Muta comes back to WCW.

*Sgt. Slaughter and Sheik Adnan are found shot on back road in Alabama.

*WCW puts on a glitch-free high-quality PPV.

*Dick the Bruiser opens a ref school.

*Bob Caudle is never seen and, best of all, never heard from again.

*WCW realizes mainstream press is good.

*JYD is put to sleep.

SOMEONE

*Dusty Rhodes will not last 12 months as booker of WCW.

*Joe Pedicino's GWF will go belly-up.

*Jim Cornette will return to WCW somewhat humbled.

*Ted Turner will sell WCW after his marriage to Jane Fonda.

*WCW will hire Bill Watts to book.

*Ric Flair will regain WCW World belt, briefly.

CARL D. COOK:

*Sting will lose the World Championship by June.

*WCW will go under if they do not get a good booker and get some good angles and gimmicks as well as some new wrestling stars.

*No one will want to see WWF TV shows or house shows if they do not go back to old-time wrestling.

*Global will be one of the top federations in pro wrestling.

TOM WISCHMANN

*The WWF will have Ultimate Warrior vs. Mike Tyson on TV where Tyson will get mad and kick the crap out of Warrior. Warrior will quit wrestling and Luger will dye his hair, paint his face, and call himself the Ultimate Warrior. No WWF fans will notice. WCW will hire Dusty Rhodes as booker and then he will change the name back to NWA. GWF will become the top area in the semi-independent area. It will replace the NWA temporarily as the number two area in popularity.

KEVIN WITTS

*Ric Flair regains WCW Title.

*GWF Folds.

*Ted Turner sells WCW, marries Jane Fonda, shoots himself one week later.

*Iron Sheik finally gives birth to 35 pound baby.

*"Midnight Rider" finally returns to WCW rings.

*A group of starving ex-bodybuilders attack Vince McMahon in a back alley in Stamford, CT. Tugboat makes the save.

*Sherri Martel finally falls out of her dress on a SNME.

*Liz Poffo gives birth to a Macho Baby.

*The real Black Scorpion is finally unmasked as Jack Victory.

*Sid Vicious jumps to Titan.

RANDY RAY:

WCW: There will be major changes behind the scenes. Jim Herd will eventually lose his decision-making powers. Flair will be a seventh time champion. The Steiners will win the World Tag Team Titles several times. The Sting/Luger feud will begin. Sid Vicious will continue to suck.

WWF: Hulk Hogan will win the title back. Curt Hennig will continue to get a big push. The LOD will either win the titles or be buried and will eventually leave.

EVERYWHERE ELSE: Joe Pedicino's group will get off the ground, but will not go nationwide. They will do well in Dallas and Memphis, but will not conquer any new areas. Herb Abrams' will fold before summer. The AWA will return, doing a TV taping every three weeks and a couple of spot shows a month.

ELYSE ZOIS:

*Kerry Von Erich and Ted DiBiase will meet in a Texas Death match. The Undertaker will help bury the loser.

*Buddy Rose will go on a diet and become a spokesman for Ultra Slimfast.

*Mr. Fuji will be fined for being seen in badd company.

*Arrogance will be found to be an effective insecticide.

*Ric Flair will win the title a seventh time and then lose it to Harley Race.

*Barry Windham will keep from disappearing all year.

*Tony Atlas will return to ICW to find his roots.

*WCW will adopt the motto: "We're number two, we try harder."

*The Gobbledy Gooker and Koko B. Ware will form a new tag team. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turkeys.

*Roddy Piper will trash Brother Love's pulpit and reopen Piper's Pit.

*Hulk Hogan will wrestle in the Meadowlands Arena again soon so I can see what it looks like more than half-filled again. ***

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Revancha por el Campeonato Universal
CARLOS COLON vs. KIM DUK

Revancha
EL INVADER 1 (con su guino vendado) vs. T.N.T.

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BIG BOSS MAN & TUGBOAT vs. EARTHQUAKE & DINO BRAVO

NIKOLAI VOLKOFF vs. SERGEANT SLAUGHTER

MORE TAG TEAM ACTION!
THE BUSHWHACKERS vs. THE ORIENT EXPRESS

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ULTIMATE WARRIOR AND JAKE "THE SNAKE" ROBERTS vs. "THE MILLION DOLLAR MAN" TED DIBIASE AND "KEEM" (w/bodyguard Virgil and manager "The Million Dollar" plus more...)

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UNIVERSAL CHAMPIONSHIP ALL STAR WRESTLING

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ACTIVITY CENTER KINGMAN

MAIN EVENT
North American Heavy Weight Title
RIC McCORD vs. DR. TOM PRICHARD

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HULK HOGAN & TUGBOAT -VS- EARTHQUAKE & DINO BRAVO

— WWF INTERCONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE MATCH —
CHAMP - TEXAS TORNADO -VS- MR. PERFECT

— TAG TEAM ACTION —
LEGION OF DOOM -VS- DEMOLITION

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